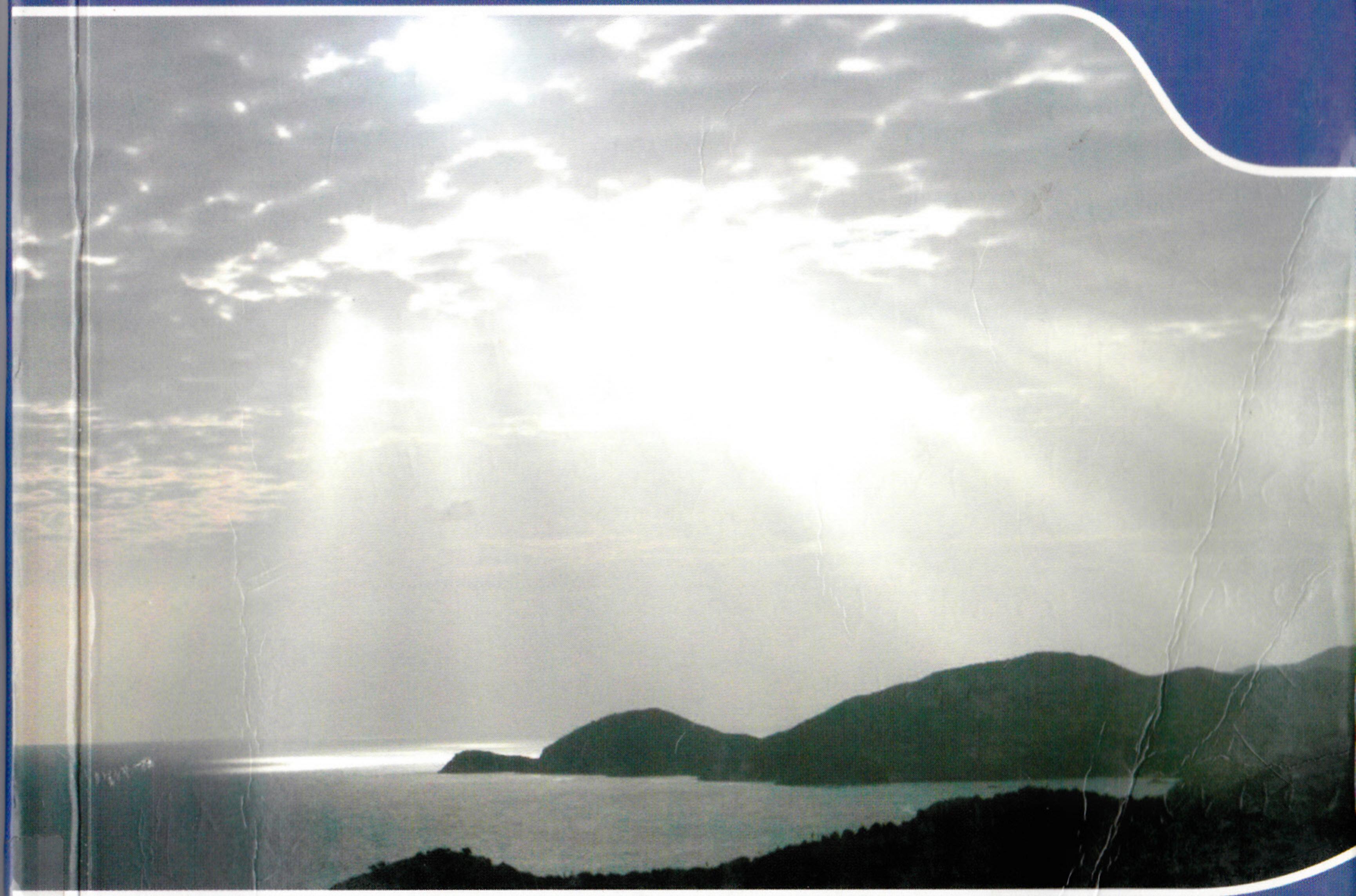


HELP from Allah

in the Stories of the Quran



Compiled and arranged by Ahmad Farid

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INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to the One who has pleased us with Islam as our religion, and plainly established for us the evidence of its truth. He, Allah, has made clear for us the path to know and believe in Him with conviction. He promised an abounding reward to whomsoever upheld His rules and obeyed His commands. Allah Almighty has, furthermore, prepared a magnificent success for such of His servants. Hence, He ordained upon us submission to Him and His laws as well as adherence to His pillars and devotion to His bond and its means. It is, indeed, the religion with which He is pleased for Himself, His prophets, messengers, and holy angels. With it the rightly guided were shown the way and to it the prophets and messengers called.

“DO THEY SEEK, PERCHANCE, A FAITH OTHER THAN IN GOD, ALTHOUGH IT IS UNTO HIM THAT WHATEVER IS IN THE HEAVENS AND ON EARTH SURRENDERS ITSELF, WILLINGLY OR UNWILLINGLY, SINCE UNTO HIM ALL MUST RETURN?” (3:83)

I bear witness that there is no God save Allah, He is alone and has no partner, companion or associate. He is high above the fabrications and lies of the liars.

“Never did God take unto Himself any off-spring, nor has there ever been any deity side by side with Him: [for, had there been any,] lo! Each deity would surely have stood apart [from the others] in whatever it had created, and they would surely have [tried to] overcome one another!

LIMITLESS IN HIS GLORY IS GOD, [FAR] ABOVE ANYTHING THAT MEN MAY DESIRE BY WAY OF DEFINITION, KNOWING ALL THAT IS BEYOND THE REACH OF A CREATED BEING'S PERCEPTION AS WELL AS ALL THAT CAN BE WITNESSED BY A CREATURE'S SENSES OR MIND – AND, HENCE, SUBLIMELY EXALTED IS HE ABOVE ANYTHING TO WHICH THEY MAY ASCRIBE A SHARE IN HIS DIVINITY!” (23:91-2)

I also bear witness that Muhammad is His servant, His messenger and cream of His creation. He is the greatest of all men, custodian of God's

revelation, and ambassador between Him and His servants. May Allah bestow His peace and blessings upon Him and his noble family. Having said that, surely the most truthful words are contained in the Book of Allah and, likewise, the best guidance is that of Muhammad ﷺ. The worst matters are those that are newly invented, for every invented matter is a going astray and every going astray is in the Hell-fire.

Allah Almighty has narrated to us the best stories in His Holy Book.

They are, unquestionably, the most fascinating in their method, the most delightful in style, and the most truthful in their presentation of information.

“WE DO RELATE UNTO THEE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF STORIES, IN THAT WE REVEAL TO THEE THIS [PORTION OF THE] QURAN: BEFORE THIS, THOU TOO WAS AMONG THOSE WHO KNEW IT NOT.” (12:3)

There is no doubt that a significant number of the stories in the Quran are concerned with our negligence of it (the Quran), our indifference to its advices, and failure to reflect upon its meanings. They are stories, which the believers are obliged to take stock of in order to reinforce their faith and draw from the lessons and advices of previous generations. Certainly the traditions and laws of Allah among His servants are the same. “Thus [it is]: no change wilt thou find in God’s way; yea, no deviation wilt thou ever find in God’s way!” (35:43) Hence, it is only natural that the final success in this world and in the hereafter will be with the believers. At the end of the day authority and power will be with the party of God that observe His oneness. Allah Almighty testifies to this when He says:

“AND THE END IS [BEST] FOR THE RIGHTEOUS.” (28:83)

He says also:

“AND THAT OUR FORCES – THEY SURELY MUST CONQUER.” (37:173) AND: “WE WILL, WITHOUT DOUBT, HELP OUR MESSENGERS AND THOSE WHO BELIEVE, [BOTH] IN THIS WORLD’S LIFE AND ON THE DAY WHEN THE WITNESSES WILL STAND FORTH.” (40:51)

By reflecting upon the stories of the prophets and messengers the divine laws become manifest. On all occasions, it was the believers who enjoyed victory and empowerment in the earth. At the same time,

destruction and punishment has always been the fate of those who denied faith. Allah Almighty says;

“AND [REMEMBER] OUT OF ALL THE ACCOUNTS RELATING TO THE [EARLIER] APOSTLES WE CONVEY UNTO THEE [ONLY] THAT WHERE WITH WE [AIM TO] MAKE FIRM THY HEART: FOR THROUGH THESE [ACCOUNTS] COMES THE TRUTH UNTO THEE, AS WELL AS AN ADMONITION AND A REMINDER UNTO ALL BELIEVERS.” (11:120)

Ibn Kathir, the eminent commentator on the Quran, explained the meaning of this verse in the following way. That Allah Almighty is informing Muhammad that he would gain strength in his heart from all the stories that he narrated to him about the earlier prophets and messengers and their people. That he would find relief from the accounts of their disputes and controversies which affected them. And, to no less a degree that he, Muhammad, would also feel encouraged in his heart about the denials and punishments that were meted out to the prophets and how Allah ultimately granted victory to His party, the believers, and disappointed His enemies, the unbelievers. All of this would bolster your heart firmly O Muhammad so that you would find example in your brother prophets who passed before you. “And in this the truth has come to you.” In this all-embracing chapter about the lives of the prophets and how Allah gave them success and destroyed the unbelievers. True stories and accurate information came to you to discourage the unbelievers and, at the same time, remind the believers to reflect.1

Surely it is the people of pure hearts and conscious minds who will benefit from these great stories and wise reminders as Allah Almighty says:

“INDEED, IN THE STORIES OF THESE MEN THERE IS A LESSON FOR THOSE WHO ARE ENDOWED WITH INSIGHT. [AS FOR THIS REVELATION,] IT COULD NOT POSSIBLY BE A DISCOURSE INVENTED [BY MAN]: NAY INDEED, IT IS [A DIVINE WRIT] CONFIRMING THE TRUTH OF WHATEVER THERE STILL REMAINS [OF EARLIER REVELATIONS], CLEARLY SPELLING OUT EVERYTHING, AND [OFFERING] GUIDANCE AND GRACE UNTO PEOPLE WHO WILL BELIEVE.” (12:111)

Al Qasimi recalled that according to some researchers the purpose of these stories is not to invent or contrive a narrative. The evidence of this is borne out by the fact that examples existed among other people before

the revelation of the Quran. And, even if they differed somewhat in their detail and parts from the way they were narrated by the people, they did match each other in their entirety and confirmed their general ideas. For this reason the polytheists should not think for one moment that these are stories made up by the Prophet. They should, instead, ask the People of the Book (Christians and Jews) about these stories because they are also recorded in their books and well known to them. The presence of the Quranic stories among previous peoples are among the greatest facts that confirms and support it because the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ never read the Jewish and Christian books. It should not be misunderstand, however, that the stories in the Quran must not differ from those in the Torah and Gospel in certain aspects. Had this been the case Allah would not have said:

“BEHOLD, THIS QURAN EXPLAINS TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL MOST [OF THAT] WHEREON THEY HOLD DIVERGENT VIEWS.” (27:76)

Its stories differ from theirs and clarifies for them the truth from the falsehood; hence there is no contradiction between the Quran’s confirmation of their stories in totality and its disagreement with them in certain parts.²

This victory, which Allah has promised to the believers, will not always come during their first encounter with the unbelievers. Neither will it come to pass without Allah testing His friends and purifying the believers. Indeed, quite often this victory is delayed. As was the case with the Prophet Muhammad and his companions until they said when will the help of Allah come. This, therefore, is the way of Allah with His friends and His party. As he says: “[All the earlier apostles had to suffer persecution for a long time;] but at last – when those apostles had lost all hope and saw themselves branded as liars – Our succor attained to them: whereupon everyone whom We willed [to be saved] was saved [and the deniers of the truth were destroyed]: for, never can Our punishment be averted from people who are lost in sin.” (12:110) Thus, the stories in the Quran are for the guidance of the community and notification about the way Allah deals with His servants.

With the passage of time our community has disregarded whatever was mentioned in its book concerning the basis of upbringing and wisdom.

What is it, therefore, that has befallen our community and caused it to turn its attention away from the stories, which the Quran narrates? Why has our community become so negligent that it regards these stories as mere historical commentaries, which benefit no one except historians?

The Quran presents the stories of the prophets, which are undoubtedly the highest landmarks and most distinguished episodes in human history. And why not, after they have combined the best style and chosen the most suitable events to highlight its message and the excellent example of the seal of prophets and those who supported them. The love of imitating is a natural quality ingrained in man, especially of the one that is followed. These are some of the unique features of these stories and are not found elsewhere. Is it not utterly disgraceful, therefore, that we should read the stories of the Quran and understand them simply as folklore that have long vanished with the passage of time? And what is the relationship between them and us anyway? Surely by Allah, this is destruction, but it is not due to ignorance of the purpose of these stories; that they are advices for those who take heed, reminders for those who think, and instruction to those who desist.

On the whole, there is no other purpose for these stories except their benefit, counsel, and enlightenment to the Muslims.

“INDEED, IN THE STORIES OF THESE MEN THERE IS A LESSON FOR THOSE WHO ARE ENDOWED WITH INSIGHT.” (12:III)

A careful consideration of these stories confirms that they do not mention anything except that it is suited for guidance and counsel. At the same time they ignore many episodes that are not essential or necessary. Hence one would not find a story that does not contain tawhid (monotheism), knowledge, good conduct, rational evidence, enlightenment, and reminders that delight the mindful.³

Using the method of vetting and with the help of Allah, I relied upon the various biographies of the Prophet Muhammad, the commentaries on the Quran, and traditions about the other prophets. I have collected for our brothers and students, pointers about the virtues of the prophets, which were confirmed and transmitted after they were carefully selected and verified. Some mention is also made about their mission and the encounters that demonstrated their faith. To these were added the spiri-

tual rewards and results in order to complete the benefits from the stories of the Quran. We deliberated upon the episodes of counsel and advice not in an exhaustive manner but according to the help rendered by Allah, the enthusiasm of research, and availability of references. The way is thus open for others to follow and complete this noble work. I began by mentioning the “apostles of great resolve” (ulul azam min al rusul) and I singled out the last of them, our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ with an essay entitled “Bringing closer the knowledge of the Prophet ﷺ.” This was done by explaining his virtues and the special favors that Allah Almighty bestowed upon him. After this some mention was made about his inspirational acts with explanations of their lessons and admonitions. Still in this section, you will find, dear reader, reference to the other “apostles of great resolve” according to the order in which they were mentioned by Allah in Surah al Ahzab:

“AND LO! WE DID ACCEPT A SOLEMN PLEDGE FROM ALL THE PROPHETS – FROM THEE, [O MUHAMMAD,] AS WELL AS FROM NUH, AND IBRAHIM, AND MUSA, AND EESA THE SON OF MARY –; FOR WE ACCEPTED A MOST WEIGHTY, SOLEMN PLEDGE FROM [ALL OF] THEM.” (33:7)

To complete these benefits, I included in this introduction two sections:

First: General benefits of the Quranic stories

Second: A statement on the history books and commentaries about the Israelite folklore and fabrications with an explanation of the Islamic ruling concerning them and the author’s blamelessness for their fallacies.

Because Allah, the Benefactor, the Generous favored me with his help to compile and complete this book within a very short period, I have called it: Help from Allah in the stories of the Quran. I therefore implore Him to help me complete the stories of the prophets and other Quranic stories. Surely Allah gives succor to those who strive for the things that He loves and pleases Him. He bestows upon His believing servant more than he ever hoped for –

O our Lord please accept our efforts for verily You art the hearer the Knower; and have mercy upon us as You art the Acceptor of Repentance, the most Merciful.

I appeal to every Muslim who finds some error or negligence in this book to sincerely advise me about it so that I may repent to Allah and correct them in future editions, God willing. May he endow us with good health; surely He is the Hearer of Prayers and worthy of all hope. We can only conclude this introduction by affirming that which we alluded to earlier – that there could be no power or movement except through Allah.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

By way of defining and explaining this new literary work on the stories of the Quran, I believe it would be useful to outline my method of research and what distinguishes this new study of the stories in the Quran from other publications. These are summarized in the following ten points:

I have devoted special attention to the “apostles of great resolve” by apportioning the first part of this book to them, all with the exception of Allah’s final messenger, Muhammad ﷺ. He was accorded a special study. Likewise, it does not cross the mind of a certain reader who denies that Adam was actually a prophet. We will refer to his story thereafter.

I began each of these studies by citing the virtues of each of the prophets, which altogether were not found in the general literature. Reference was, however, made to the Quranic verses and the commentaries of various scholars concerning them. Then I confirmed the correctness of these virtues in the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

I did not attempt a complete narration of all that was mentioned in the stories; instead I limited the studies to their messages because this is our primary objective. At the same time, I explained how these apostles went about their missions, their patience and sincerity. Some brief references were made to their inspirational stands and how Allah granted them victory over His enemies and their enemies. The purpose of this is to strengthen those who call to Islam and increase their trust in the help of Allah.

Contrary to many who have written on this subject, I have imparted a great amount of information. Yet, it remains of little significance to me whether the reader should grasp the desired meanings or benefits through what I have mentioned or from any other source.

I omitted all the Israelite folklore and fabrications, indeed every weak account that was not verified by the able imams with Quranic texts and authentic prophetic traditions. Similarly all the details and names not

mentioned by the Quran or verified by the prophetic traditions were omitted. Even if it was assumed that the Israelite legends were true, they had no value. Hence whatever we decided to transmit was included only because of their usefulness in illustrating the lessons and admonitions.

This book features observations from some of the foremost imams and commentators of the Quran such as; al Tabari, al Qurtabi, al Zamakhshari and certain contemporary scholars who understood the needs of their age and their people. These included; al Shinqiti, al Sa’adi, Rashid Rida and Sayid Qutub. May Allah have mercy on them all.

I mentioned in the introduction some useful matters that explain the importance of the Quranic stories as a method of education upon which rests the upliftment and honor of the community. I have, therefore, collected what I came upon and what Allah Almighty enabled us to understand from the stories of the Quran. To Him belongs all the praise and strength. I also mentioned the ruling concerning the narration of weak and fabricated hadiths. I made amends on behalf of earlier writers who mentioned such hadiths in their books.

I investigated the hadiths that were attributed to the Prophet (directly without mention of the narrators in their chains). Wherever the relevant references were obtained and the zeal for scientific research availed, I managed to identify the locations of these hadiths in the books of Prophetic traditions, even though I did not find them in the general storybooks.

As is always the case in serious research, I have avoided excessive details and instead tried to record the benefits of these stories in the most concise manner. In many instances I condensed the chronology of events, classified, and investigated their contents without any additions.

I implored Allah’s blessings and urged Him to make me a source of benefit to our brothers, forgive my shortcomings and errors, and adorn me and the Muslims with good deeds. Verily Allah is the source of help for those who depend upon Him.

BENEFITS OF THE QURANIC STORIES

In one of his studies on the Quran, the eminent Shaykh Mana' al Qatan wrote: "The ear reaches out to the incident that is linked to causes and effects. If it is punctuated by items of instruction in the experiences of past generations, the love to examine and know them are always among the strongest factors that implant them in human souls. On the other hand, verbal admonitions that are issued one after the other are never retained or understood in their entirety by the mind. But when, however, a picture is taken from actual life with its events, their aims become clear and the individual feels at ease to listen to them with interest and yearning. Thereby becoming influenced by their instructions and admonitions."⁴

Among the benefits of the Quranic stories, therefore, is that they enhance and complete faith in the messengers of Allah. For while we believe in all the prophets generally, their stories, absolute honesty, virtue, and other qualities of perfection with which Allah portrayed them, all help to effect faith. Indeed, this detailed faith in the prophets and their love, which surpassed all other men, was extended even to the animals. This is one of the factors that help in the increase of faith.

On another level, the stories of the prophets affirm faith in Allah, His oneness, and sincere work for Him. Similarly, they reinforces faith in the hereafter, illustrate the beauty of monotheism and its duties. They make clear the folly of associating partners with Allah, a cause for destruction in this world and the next.

These stories are lessons for the believers. They provide guidance to them in every religious matter. They direct them in the ways of monotheism, in the performance of worship, propagation, patience, and firmness in all circumstances of adversity and anxiety. They help to meet the challenges these situations with assurance, tranquility and total resolve. Still another benefit of the Quranic stories is that they cultivate honesty and sincerity to Allah in every action and undertaking. They create an awareness of the reward promised by Allah Almighty to His

servants; inspiring them not to seek reward, favor or thanks from the creation except in the matters that benefit the creation.

They contain legal rules and benefits. These legal secrets are of such immense value that no student would be able to dispense with them.

They embody admonition and reminders, enticement and fear, as well as fulfillment after difficulty. Similarly, these stories reveal good endings to things witnessed in this world, good commendation, and love in the hearts of the creation which always serve as fuel for the God-fearing, happiness to those who engage in much worship, consolation to the sad, and admonition to the believers. The purpose of these stories, therefore, is not for evening conversation. Their greatest aim, instead, is to serve as reminders and instruction.⁵

The stories of the Quran confirm the truth of what was revealed to our Prophet ﷺ as Allah Almighty says:

"THESE ACCOUNTS OF SOMETHING THAT WAS BEYOND THE REACH OF THY PERCEPTION WE [NOW] REVEAL UNTO THEE, [O MUHAMMAD: FOR] NEITHER THOU NOR THY PEOPLE KNEW THEM [FULLY] ERE THIS. BE, THEN, [LIKE NUH,] PATIENT IN ADVERSITY — FOR, BEHOLD, THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THE GOD-CONSCIOUS! (11:49) THIS, OF COURSE, WAS DUE TO THE FACT THAT PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ HAD NOT STUDIED THE PREVIOUS REVELATIONS.

They offer relief from the Prophet ﷺ and believers concerning the rejection, punishment, and accusations of magic and madness that were thrown at them. All the previous messengers were opposed and they met with the same castigation. Yet they persevered until the help of Allah came and the unbelievers were destroyed. As Allah Almighty says:

"AND, INDEED, [EVEN] BEFORE THY TIME HAVE APOSTLES BEEN GIVEN THE LIE, AND THEY ENDURED WITH PATIENCE ALL THOSE CHARGES OF FALSEHOOD, AND ALL THE HURT DONE TO THEM, TILL SUCCOR CAME UNTO THEM FROM US: FOR THERE IS NO POWER THAT COULD ALTER [THE OUTCOME OF] GOD'S PROMISES. AND SOME OF THE HISTORIES OF THOSE APOSTLES HAVE ALREADY COME WITHIN THY KEN. (6:34)

One of the aims of the Quranic stories is to highlight an important doctrinal truth through the historical narrative. That for consecutive generations, all the prophets came with one message and one mission. The single message is that there is no God save Allah. The single mission,

that Allah alone deserves to be worshipped because mankind has no God save Him.

The oneness of god is the paramount issue in the life of humanity, hence the successive messengers were sent for this purpose only. Everything else after this was arranged upon it. As a result the individual acquires an affinity to a huge unified nation for generations.

"VERILY, [O YOU WHO BELIEVE IN ME,] THIS COMMUNITY OF YOURS IS ONE SINGLE COMMUNITY, SINCE I AM THE SUSTAINER OF YOU ALL: WORSHIP, THEN, ME [ALONE]!" (21:92)

Among the benefits of these stories is their confirmation that the believers must be tested. That the forces of ignorance will, inevitably, unleash upon them various forms of torment. And, moreover, that the believers would remain under such pressure for some time without any help from Allah. During this period, Allah will grant respite to the transgressors. Meanwhile, as they intensify their persecution of the believers the tormentors would themselves grow in arrogance because of their dominance over the believers. This state of affairs will continue until the help of Allah comes. Hence, by His power the believers will be granted victory and the unbelievers would be destroyed.⁶

We learn from these stories also that the mission of the prophets was to deliver the message to Allah's servants. Apart from the propagation of what was contained in the revelation, they had no ability to benefit or harm the people, either religiously in terms of faith and piety or in a worldly sense in respect of sustenance and health. Likewise, they were unable to remove their harm. One must only recall here that Ibrahim's father, Nuh's son, and his wife, as well as the wife of Lot, were all unbelievers.

The Quranic stories further clarify how the people of the various prophets doubted them claiming that the signs which they brought from Allah were magic. Hence they suggested that they bring down the angels and other natural physical signs. The prophets responded by explaining to them that these signs were from the power of Allah Almighty and not from any power that they acquired.

The prophets also illustrated in these stories that guidance in religion causes the increase of blessings and their preservation. And that it is with this guidance happiness in the hereafter is attained.

A careful study of these stories also gives an insight into the kind of advices that were given by the various prophets according to the condition and needs of their individual people. This is demonstrated in the people of Nuh - well known for their corruption, in the story of Pharaoh - distinguished for his stubbornness and arrogance on account of his wealth, the people of Lot and their outrageous indecencies, Ad with their use of excessive force and brutality, Thamud in their amusement, merrymaking and ingratitude, Madiyan in their miserliness and giving in short measure, and the Children of Israel for their rebellion and stagnation in faith.

The Quranic stories explain Allah's rules in preparing people mentally and spiritually for belief and disbelief, goodness and evil, and guidance and waywardness. They highlight the excessive arrogance of leaders and figureheads who blindly imitate their fathers instead of adopting faith and reform. These stories show that the first people who invariably accept guidance are the underprivileged and poor after disbelief, ingratitude, indecency, oppression, and vice.⁷

Among the benefits of studying these stories is the endorsement by the prophets of their forerunners, the revival of their memories, and pursuit of their accomplishments.

Still on another level, the Quranic stories refute the claims of the People of the Book with evidence of the guidance that they concealed. They challenge them even with what is in their books before they were distorted and changed. As Allah says:

"ALL FOOD WAS LAWFUL UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, SAVE WHAT ISRAEL HAD MADE UNLAWFUL; UNTO ITSELF [BY ITS SINNING] BEFORE THE TORAH WAS BESTOWED FROM ON HIGH. SAY: "COME FORWARD, THEN, WITH THE TORAH AND RECITE IT, IF WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE!"⁸ (3:93)

Through their studies of these stories, the believers grow in love for the prophets and those who supported them. This is an asset that leads to the completion of faith in the prophets. At the same time it increases dislike of and loathing for their enemies. There is no doubt, therefore, that the love of the prophets is among the causes of entrance into paradise. This is confirmed in the saying of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ: A person will be with whom he loves.⁹

Among them also is that a witness must study and learn what he will testify with on the Day of Judgment. That all the apostles delivered their messages. And that Prophet Muhammad will be a witness for them. Abu Sa'eed al Khudri said that the Prophet ﷺ said: Narrated Abu Said: Allah's Apostle said, "Nuh and his nation will come (on the Day of Resurrection and Allah will ask (Nuh), 'Did you convey (the Message)?' He will reply, 'Yes, O my Lord!' Then Allah will ask Nuh's nation, 'Did Nuh convey My Message to you?' They will reply, 'No, no prophet came to us.' Then Allah will ask Nuh, 'Who will stand a witness for you?' He will reply, 'Muhammad and his followers (will stand witness for me).' So, I and my followers will stand as witnesses for him (that he conveyed Allah's Message)." That is, (the interpretation) of the Statement of Allah: "Thus we have made you a just and the best nation that you might be witnesses Over mankind..." (2.143)

In conclusion, Shaykh Man'a al Qatan noted: the noble Quran contains many stories that are repeated in different places. One single story is thus mentioned in several parts of the Quran and told in different ways; forwarding or delaying certain episodes, being brief or detailed or otherwise. The wisdom for this is as follows:

1. Illustrating the most excellent forms of Quranic eloquence. Among the special features of the art of rhetoric is the ability to convey one single meaning in various ways. Thus, every story that is repeated in the Quran is presented in a manner and form that is distinct. The reader is, therefore, not bored by their repetition. Instead, they renew within him meanings that he did not perceive in other readings.
2. The force of its unparalleled nature: the display of one meaning in several forms with the inability of the Arabs to produce a chapter like it was, in fact, the greatest challenge that they were to face.
3. Interest in the subject of the story to establish its lessons in the soul: the repetitions in various ways confirm and indicate the importance, as is the case in the story of Musa and Pharaoh. It represents the conflict between truth and falsehood in the most perfect manner. Yet the story is not repeated in one single chapter regardless of the amount of the times it is repeated elsewhere.

4. The different objectives to which the stories point: they mention some of their numerous meanings for the purpose of a certain situation and reveal other meanings in all other cases, according to the needs of the various circumstances.¹⁰

STATEMENT ON THE PROPHETIC BIOGRAPHIES

INTERPRETATIONS AND RULINGS CONCERNING ISRAELITE FOLKLORE AND FABRICATIONS

Several factors prompted this study of the prophets. The first is the desire to know what was confirmed about their virtues, outstanding deeds, and high standings. The aim was to publish these findings because the prophets are genuine examples and righteous models for mankind. Allah Almighty chose them from among all other men and endowed them with noble qualities and pure characters. He thereafter ordered us to follow their way:

"TO THOSE WHOM GOD HAS GUIDED. FOLLOW, THEN, THEIR GUIDANCE."
(6:90)

To His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ he said:

"REMAIN, THEN, [O MESSANGER,] PATIENT IN ADVERSITY, JUST AS ALL OF
THE APOSTLES ENDOWED WITH FIRMNESS OF HEART, BORE THEMSELVES
WITH PATIENCE." (46:35)

For this reason, the Prophet ﷺ gave special importance to their virtues and high station even though he was the leader and most prominent of all the apostles. In his authentic collection, Imam Muslim transmits a tradition by Anas ibn Malik in which he said: "A man came to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and addressed him thus; 'O best of mankind.' The Prophet ﷺ replied; 'He is Ibrahim.'¹¹

Similarly, Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Don't give superiority to any prophet amongst Allah's Prophets, for when the trumpet will be blown, everyone on the earth and in the heavens will become unconscious except those whom Allah will exempt. The trumpet will be blown for the second time and I will be the first to be resurrected to see Musa holding Allah's Throne. I will not know whether the unconsciousness which Musa received on the Day of Tur has been sufficient for him, or has he got up before me. And I do not say that there is anybody who is better than Yunus bin Matta."¹²

Among these hadiths also, is that narrated by Abu Hurayrah: The people said, "O Allah's Apostle! Who is the most honorable amongst the people (in Allah's Sight)?" He said, "The most righteous amongst them." They said, "We do not ask you, about this." He said, "Then Joseph, Allah's Prophet, the son of Allah's Prophet, The son of Allah's Prophet the son of Allah's Khalil (i.e. Ibrahim)..."¹³

Additionally, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was informed about some of the physical features that distinguished the other prophets. Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet ﷺ declared concerning his night journey: "On the night of my Ascension to Heaven, I saw (the prophet) Musa who was a thin person with lank hair, looking like one of the men of the tribe of Shanua; and I saw Eesa who was of average height with red face as if he had just come out of a bathroom. And I resemble prophet Ibrahim more than any of his offspring does..."¹⁴

Al Hafiz said he believed the narrator to be Abdur Razaq. The word al mudtarib: moderately tall. It was also held to mean: lean. In the account of Hashim it is presented with the term "darab" and is also taken to mean lean, with there being no inconsistency between the two. According to ibn al Tin, this description is contrary to his saying "he is plump" (inahu jasim) except that the word "jasim" also connotes extra height.

As for ibn Hajar, his statement "as if he was from the people of Zut" supports this. They were very tall and well mannered. In another hadith on the Night Journey it was mentioned; "I saw Musa, he was tall and wiry". Al Daudi objected to this saying: "I do not see this as tenable because a tall person is not necessarily described as wiry. He further argued that these two features are not inconsistent. Al Nawawi said: "The description of Musa as physically wiry refers to his compactness and not the wiriness of his hair because it was reported that he was very hairy.

Concerning his description of Eesa; he was squat and of medium height. That is to say he was neither very tall nor short. And his saying: "As if he had just come out of a bathroom" describes him with a clear color, youthful body and much water upon his face as if he was in some location from where he emerged with water. In the narration of Ibn Umar it says: "His head was dripping with water."¹⁵

Then he described Ibrahim as resembling himself, saying: "And I resembled him like his son resembled him." And in another account: "So look at your friend" meaning himself.¹⁶

The second matter: is something which we already alluded to in the previous section. That is obtaining the lessons, warnings, and remembrance of the benefits and spiritual effects from the stories generally, and every story in particular. This is in accord with the saying of Allah Almighty:

"INDEED, IN THE STORIES OF THESE MEN THERE IS A LESSON FOR THOSE WHO ARE ENDOWED WITH INSIGHT." (12:111)

The third matter is: that the purpose of the research in this section is to purge the stories of all that were appended to them over the past centuries and generations. These include superstitions, fabrications and Israelite folklore. Verily Allah Almighty has obliged us to follow all that was revealed in His Noble Book and what was confirmed from the traditions of His beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

In this regard, Shaykh Muhammad Abu Shuhbah writes: "There are still among the orators and people who oversee certain religious rites, persons who have no knowledge and deep awareness of the hadith narrations. Many of these individuals assume positions of imams and orators even though their qualifications are well below that which is required for such positions. They invariably base their sermons on sources which cannot be considered credible references of hadith since they provide no clear view about which of these traditions are authentic, weak or fabricated. Those who make public acceptance their objective, focus their efforts on the hadiths of motivation and deterrence (targhib wa tarhib), anecdotes, and intriguing stories, which were apparently narrated by storytellers and ascetics who had a particular interest in them. All their concern, it seems, is to flatter the public and direct them toward the remembrance of exaggerated, alarming, and strange matters. Undoubtedly, this group should refrain from giving public speeches, admonitions or reminders so that they would not infect people's ideas or debase the established norms and religious values. In other words, the proof must come from Islam and not for it. Indeed, the authentic traditions and established stories are in no need of weak and fabricated

hadiths or false stories in order to soften hearts and influence souls".¹⁷

A diligent researcher into the prophetic biographies, history and commentaries of the Quran will be staggered by the amount of superstition and fabrication which surely should not be narrated. As Allah Almighty says: "A lie about me is not the same as lying about any other. For whoever deliberately tells a lie about me must prepare his seat in the fire of hell."¹⁸ Accordingly, there is no doubt that the promotion of fabricated hadiths and their citation in references or in lessons without mentioning their weakness or falsehood all amount to complicity in lying upon the Prophet ﷺ.

Imam al Nawawi wrote: "It is prohibited to transmit a fabricated hadith after it was ascertained that it is false or about which there is prevailing doubt. Whoever narrates a hadith knowing or suspecting that it was fabricated and did not make known this nature of his narration, such a person will be classified among those who lied upon the Prophet ﷺ. The following hadith will apply to such a person. "Whoever ascribes a hadith to me knowing that it is a lie that person will be considered among the liars."¹⁹

As for Imam al Daraqutni, he wrote: "The Prophet ﷺ forewarned of the fire for those who lied upon him after they were ordered to propagate about him. The implication here is that the Prophet's followers were ordered to transmit that which is true about him without conveying that which is defective or false. They should not transmit all that was ascribed to him because he advised: "It is enough sin for a person to speak about all that he hears."²⁰ Whoever transmits all that he hears about the Prophet ﷺ without distinguishing the truth from the falsehood brings sin upon himself and it is feared that he would be included among those who lied on the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ foretold about the false narrations and hadiths that would appear among his community about himself. Hence he advised to avoid their narrators and warned about listening to their hadiths and accepting their reports. He said: "There will arise at the end of time people from my community who will tell you about things which neither you nor your fathers ever heard about. Beware of them."²¹

Admittedly, one may ask; why do the scholars take license to transmit

many weak and fabricated hadiths in their books without insisting upon their authenticity as did Imams al Bukhari and Muslim? The answer is that weak hadiths that are not very weak or fabricated may, in several different ways, be restored to the extent of being considered good (hasan) or even authentic and given an exceptional standing. In the same manner, a hadith that is not by itself authentic may be rectified for certain reasons and used to strengthen others or be strengthened by others.

Secondly: The forerunners in this field of study narrated hadiths with their chains of authority; and as the saying went: whoever attributes a hadith to you has indeed submitted to your authority. Such a statement may have been correct in their golden age when a student could have examined the chain of authority of a hadith and know its defect. Some scholars disclosed that by looking at the chain they arranged hadiths according to their particular features that distinguished between authentic, weak and fabricated. Thus by mentioning the chain of authority the classifier cleared himself from any misgiving. The student must, therefore, pay particular interest to the chain of authority and judge a hadith accordingly. Needless to say though, that today it is even more necessary to clarify the status of a hadith in terms of its authenticity or weakness.

Thirdly: Perhaps the weakness of some narrators may be hidden from others. This does not in any way belittle their knowledge and piety, for after the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Allah did not grant excellence to another human being.

Four: There are, of course, various reasons for invalidating a hadith. What some imams may deem objectionable others may not view in the same manner. Thus, the scholars differ among themselves on what makes a hadith sahih – authentic or weak.²²

The Israelite fables: Many scholars have taken license to transmit these fables in accord with the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: "Convey from me even if it is one verse of the Quran and discuss about the Children of Israel for there is no harm."²³ Ibn Kathir noted that these Israelite fables are recalled only as citations or quotations but not as evidence. They are divided into three categories:

One: Those that we know and have been verified as true. Such hadiths are considered authentic.

Second: Those that we know as false by their disagreement with what we have.

Third: Those about which there is total silence. They are neither of this or that category, hence we neither believe nor dispute them. It is permitted to speak about these fables. Yet, they invariably proffer no benefit to one's religion. The scholars from among the People of the Book differ about this immensely. The commentators of the Quran also differ about them. A notable example was what they mentioned about the names of the dwellers of the cave, the color and number of their dogs. Likewise, about the tree from which Musa staff was made, or the names of the birds that Allah brought back to life for Ibrahim. Others have, besides, identified and named the person who was murdered in Surah al Baqarah. In similar manner, they refer to other issues that Allah mentioned in the Quran, the specification of which brings no benefit to those entrusted either in their religion or worldly life.²⁴

According to al Allamah Ahmad Shakir, the approval to speak about them and what we do not consider evidence of their truth or falsehood is one thing. And, to mention them in the commentary of the Quran and make them declarations or accounts about the meaning of its verses, or to attribute to them what was not in them or in their detail is quite another matter. The fact is establishing something like this on par with the word of Allah is to give the impression that what we do not know the truth or falsehood about is an illustration of Allah's sayings and explanation of what is more beautiful than what is in the Quran. Surely it is not befitting that Allah and His book should be like this.

That the Prophet ﷺ himself gave permission to discuss them. He ordered that they should not be accepted or denied. For any acceptance of their narrations or sayings is more appropriate than to compare them with the book of Allah and accordingly view them as commentaries or works of explanation.

Al Hafiz ibn Kathir wrote concerning the explanation of a verse in Surah al Kahf (18:50) after mentioning some statements about "Satan", his name and his origin. It appears that a lot has been transmitted about this matter by earlier generations though most of them were taken from Israelite fables, which have been narrated for reflection and Allah knows

best about their truth. Among them are those whose falsities are apparent because of their variance with the truth that is in our hands. Furthermore, the Quran has no need for any narrations other than what it narrates, because they are all subject to substitution, addition or deficiency. Much has been introduced into them. Yet they do not have those who masterfully memorize and purge them of the distortions of extremists and forgery of liars. This community, however, has its imams, scholars, leaders, righteous, and excellent people from among the brilliant and distinguished scholars who memorized, compiled, and edited the hadiths and set apart the authentic of them from the good, weak, abominable, fabricated, rejected, and false. They identified the fabricators, liars and unknown people and other kinds of men. All of this was done in order to purify the prophetic status and standing of Muhammad ﷺ, seal of the prophets and master of mankind from any lie that may be attributed to him or innovation that was not from him. Allah was pleased with them and He pleased them and made the highest paradise – Fir Dows – their resting place.²⁵

Al Bukhari transmitted from ibn Abbas that the Prophet ﷺ said: "O Muslims how do you ask the People of the Book and your book which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad is the most recent account with Allah, you read and it never grows old? And Allah informed you that the People of the Book substituted what He wrote and changed with their hands the Book and said: "This is from God," in order to acquire a trifling gain thereby." (2:79) Does He not forbid you with the knowledge that was sent to you from asking them and by Allah we have not seen a single man from them asking you about what was revealed to you."²⁶

Al Bukhari also transmitted from Humayd ibn Abdur Rahman that he heard Mu'awiya speak to a gathering of the Quraysh in Madinah. He mentioned Ka'ab al Ahbar and said: "Though he was one of the most truthful commentators who spoke about the People of the Book – and we do not ascribe to him lies."²⁷

Al Hafiz narrated from al Ayad: "It is correct to revert to the Book, and it is also correct to refer to Ka'ab and his sayings for he never intended lies or willfully engaged in them. Willfulness is not a condition for what is called a lie; instead it is informing about something contrary to the way it is. And this does not involve ascribing lies to Ka'ab."

Ibn al Jawzi said the meaning is that some of what Ka'ab spoke about the People of the Book were lies, not because he intended to lie, for he was among the best of their scholars.²⁸

Ibn Kathir recalled that when Ka'ab al Ahbar embraced Islam during the Caliphate of Umar he began to speak to Umar about his old books. Perhaps Umar listened to him and the people took licence from his listening to everything from him, significant and insignificant. The fact is, however, that this community is in no need for one letter from him.²⁹

Despite ibn Kathir's statement that this community is not in need of one letter from him, or even Mu'awiyah's saying that Ka'ab al Ahbar was among the most truthful persons who spoke about the People of the Book; there is no doubt that his commentaries were not devoid of Israelite fables nor the stories of the prophets that were attributed to him; for he transmitted them as they were.

Muhammad Abu Shubah said: Among the distinguishing features of ibn Kathir's great commentary is that it is considered a single thread in alerting about the Israelite fables and fabrications in the commentaries. Sometimes he mentions them and observes that they were infiltrated into the Islamic narrations. They were, he argues, from the false Israelite fables. On other occasions he does not mention them but rather alludes to them and gives his opinion about them. He was influenced in this regard by his shaykh, Imam ibn Taymiyah, and expanded upon much of what he mentioned. All the commentators who came after him mentioned and warned about the Israelite fables and fabrications. They are indebted to him in this regard. Ibn Jarir rebuked his eminence for some of the Israelite fables and fabrications, which he mentioned in his commentary. This is not surprising though, because he was from a school that was well known for memorizing hadiths and implementing them according to their textual meanings and originality in critique; combining between the rational and the transmitted. This is the school of Shaykh ul Islam ibn Taymiyah and his students ibn al Qayim, al Dhahabi and ibn Kathir and others. May Allah reward him in the best manner for this deed.³⁰

Allamah Ahmad Shakir the author of 'Umdat al Tafsir' which is an abridgement of Ibn Kathir's commentary clarifies his approach thus: "I repudiated in my book all the Israelite fables and what resembles them because the author, may Allah have mercy upon him, had criticized them

in several parts of his commentary. He exposed their fickleness and disadvantages. He further denounced their narration and outlined for himself a specific position on them. Notwithstanding, it yet appeared that he was unable to pursue the course that he adopted. Hence he was overwhelmed by many of the narrations he found and endorsed. I have however deleted all of them.³¹

There is no doubt that most of these fables in the Quranic commentaries are in the stories. This is because they are the most fertile areas to mention the strange and bizarre from the People of the Book; especially with the knowledge that most of these stories are told in their books, which were distorted through additions and deletions.

Abu Shubah says; there are in the various commentaries of the Quran with their diverse approaches countless false Israelite fables and narrations. They are particularly related to the stories of the prophets and previous nations and peoples. They have been falsely ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad, some of his companions, their successors, and the generation that followed.

These fables are not part of Islam. They are, on the contrary, from the superstitions lies and suppositions, which the Children of Israel concocted about Allah and his Messenger.³²

With these words we end the introduction, asking Allah to grant us a most excellent ending.

THE STORY OF NUH ﷺ

NUH'S VIRTUES

Allah Almighty praises him; He says:

“THE DESCENDANTS OF THOSE WHOM WE CARRIED IN THE ARK WITH NUH. HE WAS A TRULY THANKFUL SERVANT.” (17:3)

This verse, al Qasimi says, means to know him by the favors of Allah and to apply it in the right manner. In it there is an allusion that his salvation and those with him was a blessing for his gratitude. It also implies that his descendants should follow his footsteps.³³

Al Zamakhshari noted, if he ate he used to say: All praise is due to Allah the one who fed me and if he willed he would have starved me. And if he drank he said: All praise is due to Allah the one who gave me drink and if he willed he would have made me thirsty. And if he dressed he used to say: All praise is due to Allah the one who clothed me and if he willed would have left me naked.”³⁴

Ibn Kathir wrote; it is clear that the grateful is the one who engage in every kind of obedience with his heart, tongue and deeds. Gratitude is with all of them.³⁵

THE FIRST MESSENGER TO MANKIND:

There were ten generations between him and Adam. All of them practiced monotheism. Hence Allah said;

“HOW MANY GENERATIONS HAVE WE DESTROYED SINCE NUH'S TIME!”
(17:17)

Abu Hurayrah narrates a hadith about the intercession as follows; “they will come to Nuh and say; O Nuh you are the first of the messengers to the people of the earth and Allah described you as a grateful servant, can you not help us out of this situation that we are in”³⁶

Al Hafiz said: the fact that he was the first messenger (rasul) led some to question whether Adam was a prophet. It is necessary to recognize, therefore, that he was given a law for worship and that his children inherited this from him. Hence, he was a messenger to them and the first of

all messengers. It is likely though that the primacy of Nuh according to the people of opinion is linked, in their view, to the inhabitants of the earth. This may have been due to the fact that in the time of Adam there were no people in the earth or because the message of Adam to his children was like training for them. In this context, some regarded Idris with doubt. This is not answered to because there are differences of opinions about whether he was the grandfather of Nuh as presented in some sources.³⁷

One of the messengers mentioned in Surah al Shura and al Ahqaf as been endowed with firmness of heart:

“Allah said;

IN MATTERS OF FAITH, HE HAS ORDAINED FOR YOU THAT WHICH HE ENJOINED UPON NUH – AND INTO WHICH WE GAVE THEE [O MUHAMMAD] INSIGHT THROUGH REVELATION – AS WELL AS THAT WHICH WE HAD ENJOINED UPON IBRAHIM, AND MUSA, AND EESA; STEADFASTLY UPHOLD THE [TRUE] FAITH, AND DO NOT BREAK UP YOUR UNITY THEREIN.” (42:13)

“AND LO! WE DID ACCEPT A SOLEMN LEDGE FROM ALL THE PROPHETS – FROM THEE [O MUHAMMAD], AS WELL AS FROM NUH, AND IBRAHIM, AND MUSA, AND EESA THE SON OF MARY: WE ACCEPTED A MOST WEIGHTY, SOLEMN PLEDGE FROM [ALL OF] THEM.” 33:7

Abu Sa'ud pointed out: by identifying them for special mention implies His saying: ‘And from thee [O Muhammad]’ to the end of the verse, with their inclusion among the prophets to announce more of their distinguishing features and virtues. It notes further that they are among the most famous title-holders of divine laws and pillars of those endowed with firm hearts. It is also a presentation of our Prophet to make clear his illustrious standing.³⁸

Allah's answered his prayer, saved him from the great calamity, and caused his offspring to endure [on earth] Allah said:

“AND, INDEED, [IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT] NUH CRIED UNTO US – AND HOW EXCELLENT WAS OUR RESPONSE: FOR WE SAVED HIM AND HIS HOUSEHOLD FROM THAT AWESOME CALAMITY, AND CAUSED HIS OFFSPRING TO ENDURE [ON EARTH]; AND WE LEFT HIM THUS TO BE REMEMBERED AMONG LATER GENERATIONS: “PEACE BE UPON NUH THROUGHOUT ALL

THE WORLDS!" VERILY, THUS DO WE REWARD THE DOERS OF GOOD – FOR HE WAS TRULY ONE OF OUR BELIEVING SERVANTS: [AND SO WE SAVED HIM AND THOSE WHO FOLLOWED HIM] AND THEN WE CAUSED THE OTHERS TO DROWN." (37:75-82)

Al Allousi wrote: And his (Nuh's) call consisted of his prayer against the unbelievers from among his people and his plea for salvation and help. With reference to Allah's saying, 'And how excellent was our response', he remarked: Nuh called upon Allah when he lost hope about his people's faith after he had preached among them for centuries upon centuries. Yet his efforts produced no other result save increased rebellion and deviance. Thus we answered him with he best response. Surely Allah is the best of those who respond. And Allah's saying; 'And We saved him and his household from that awesome calamity', meaning drowning. 'And we caused his offspring to endure [on earth] while destroying the believers by virtue of his prayer: 'O my Sustainer! Leave not on earth any of those who deny the truth.' It was narrated that all those in the ship died except his three sons Sam, Ham, and Yafith and their wives. They remained to procure until the Day of Judgment.

Al Tirmidhi transmitted a hadith classified as good by ibn Sa'ad, Ahmad, Abu Ya'ala, ibn al Munthir, ibn Abi Hatim, al Tabarani and al Hakim who declared it perfectly authentic on the authority of Samrah. That the Prophet ﷺ said: "Sam is the father of the Arabs, Ham is the father of the Habash (Ethiopian) and Yafith is the father of Rome.

Given the fact that all the people are his descendants some commentators have used the verse as evidence. One group said that Allah caused the offspring of Nuh to endure [in the earth] and extended his posterity, and the people are not all from his ancestry. There are, indeed, nations whose origins are not traced to him.

Judging from the verse concerning who were in the ship it does not seem necessary that those of his offspring who were not in the ship should have perished. There were in fact certain far-flung places such as China where the call to monotheism did not reach, hence its people did not deserve to be drowned.³⁹

Concerning Allah's saying: "And We left him thus to be remembered among later generations: Peace be upon Nuh throughout all the worlds", al Zamakhshari wrote: It means that this prayer for steadfastness is the

salutation of each one of the prophets. None of them are exempted from it. In other words that Allah conferred this salutation upon Nuh. Likewise, He made it permanent among the angels and men who all send greetings upon Nuh affirming that he was righteous. Allah in fact portrays Nuh figuratively with exalted miracles leaving behind his memory and the salutation of all the worlds upon him until the end of time, as he was righteous. His explanation that Nuh was righteous because he was a believing servant was advanced to show the sublime station of faith, as it is the height of all qualities of praise and greatness. It thus encourages the individual to acquire these qualities and build upon them.⁴⁰

ALLAH ENDOWED HIS OFFSPRING WITH PROPHETHOOD AND REVELATION

He says:

"AND, INDEED, [TO THE SAME END] WE SENT FORTH NUH AND IBRAHIM [AS OUR MESSAGE-BEARERS], AND ESTABLISHED PROPHETHOOD AND REVELATION AMONG THEIR DESCENDANTS." (57:26)

Ibn Kathir wrote: Allah confirms here that after He sent Nuh, He did not send another messenger or prophet except from his progeny. Similarly, was the case with Ibrahim, al Khalil – the friend of the most Gracious, for no revelation was sent down from the heavens, or messenger set to mankind after him except that he was from among his offspring.⁴¹

HIS MESSAGE AND PATIENCE WITH THE STUBBORNESS AND DENIAL OF HIS PEOPLE

Ibn Abbas reported in an authentic hadith; "There were ten generations between Adam and Nuh. All of them were devoted to Islam."⁴² The meaning of qarn – here – is a generation as Allah Almighty says:

"AND HOW MANY A GENERATIONS HAVE WE [THUS] DESTROYED AFTER [THE TIME OF] NUH." (17:17)

The word qarn means one hundred years. Following all those centuries of righteousness certain things occurred which saw the people of that time turning to the worship of idols. Ibn Abbas noted in a commentary

about the verse “Do not ever abandon your gods: abandon neither Wadd nor Suwa, and neither Yaghuth nor Ya’uq nor Nasr!” (71:23), that they are the names of righteous men from among Nuh’s people. After their death the satan suggested to their people to take refuge in the councils where they used to sit with them. They called them by the names of these righteous men. Although none of these were worshipped until the time of their death, their demise saw the disappearance of knowledge. And it was from then onwards that they were worshipped.”⁴³

Al Hafiz said that the story of these righteous men marked the beginning of the worship of idols by Nuh’s people. Other generations after them followed them in this manner.⁴⁴ Allah says in Surah al Nuh⁴⁵:

“BEHOLD, WE SENT NUH UNTO HIS PEOPLE, [SAYING:] “WARN THY PEOPLE ERE GRIEVOUS SUFFERING BEFALL THEM!” [AND NUH] SAID: “O MY PEOPLE I AM BUT A PLAIN WARNER TO YOU, [SENT TO TELL] THAT YOU SHOULD WORSHIP GOD [ALONE] AND BE CONSCIOUS OF HIM. NOW DO PAY HEED UNTO ME, SO THAT HE MAY FORGIVE YOU SOME OF YOUR SINS, AND GRANT YOU RESPITE UNTIL A TERM KNOWN [TO HIM ALONE]; BUT, BEHOLD, WHEN THE TERM APPOINTED BY GOD DOES COME, IT CAN NEVER BE PUT BACK – IF YOU BUT KNEW IT!” (71:1-4)

Ibn Kathir said: Allah informs about Nuh that He sent him to his people ordering him to warn them of a severe punishment from Allah before it befalls them. If they repent and turn to Him it would be lifted from them.⁴⁶

Sayid Qutb wrote: “These broad guidelines summarize the divine religion fully, then they differ after in detail and subdivisions. Only the worship of Allah embodies a complete programme for life. It involves man’s recognition of the Divine Power, the reality of worship, and true nature of the relationship between the creation and Creator. And, the consciousness and fear of Allah is the real guarantee of people’s steadfastness on this path and the avoidance of harm here and in the hereafter.”

Obedience to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the means to attaining steadfastness on the path and receipt of guidance from its source, which is itself linked to the primary source of the creation and guidance. Allah promised those who adhered to it what He promised the repentant and oft returning. “So that He may forgive you some of your sins, and grant you respite until a term known [to Him alone]” (71:4) And the reward

for responding to the call to worship Allah, consciousness of Him, and obedience to His messenger is forgiveness, salvation from past sins and the postponement of accountability to a time known only to Allah. This is the Day of Judgment. Thus the life of this world should not be seen as abode of the final punishment.

Then He makes clear to them that this appointed term will inevitably come at its fixed time and it would not be delayed as the punishment of this world is delayed. He says:

“BUT, BEHOLD, WHEN THE TERM APPOINTED BY GOD DOES COME, IT CAN NEVER BE PUT BACK – IF YOU BUT KNEW IT!” (71:4)⁴⁷

And here was Nuh raising a report about his mission to his generous Lord. The Quran narrates:

“O MY SUSTAINER! VERILY, I HAVE BEEN CALLING UNTO MY PEOPLE NIGHT AND DAY , BUT MY CALL HAS ONLY CAUSED THEM TO FLEE FARTHER AND FARTHER AWAY [FROM THEE]. AND, BEHOLD, WHENEVER I CALLED UNTO THEM WITH A VIEW TO THY GRANTING THEM FORGIVENESS, THEY PUT THEIR FINGERS INTO THEIR EARS, AND WRAPPED THEMSELVES UP IN THEIR GARMENTS [OF SIN], AND GREW OBSTINATE, AND BECAME [YET MORE] ARROGANT IN THEIR FALSE PRIDE.” (71:5-7)

Al Qasimi observed that after Nuh had made the utmost sacrifices and everything seemed to close in on him, after making huge effort then he called; “O my Sustainer I called my people.” That is to say to the ways of monotheism and righteousness. “Night and day;” meaning continuously without let or leave. “But my call has only caused them to flee farther and farther away [from Thee]. Meaning from the truth with which You have sent me. “And, behold, whenever I called unto them” to faith, “they put their fingers into their ears.” That is to say they prevented themselves from hearing the call. “And wrapped themselves up in their garments”, meaning they enclosed themselves out of hatred of looking upon the one who was advising them in matters of religion. “And grew obstinate” in evil and unbelief. “And became [yet more] arrogant in their false pride.” Meaning they made themselves bigger than surrendering to the truth and acceptance of Nuh’s call and advices.⁴⁸ The Quran continues the narration:

“AND, BEHOLD, I CALLED UNTO THEM OPENLY; AND, BEHOLD, I PREACHED

TO THEM IN PUBLIC; AND I SPOKE TO THEM SECRETLY, IN PRIVATE; AND I SAID: "ASK YOUR SUSTAINER TO FORGIVE YOU YOUR SINS — FOR, VERILY, HE IS ALL-FORGIVING! HE WILL SHOWER UPON YOU HEAVENLY BLESSINGS ABUNDANT, AND WILL AID YOU WITH WORLDLY GOODS AND CHILDREN, AND WILL BESTOW UPON YOU GARDENS, AND BESTOW UPON YOU RUNNING WATERS." (71:8-12)

Al Zamakhshari explained: he did as the one who enjoins the good and forbids the evil by beginning with the easiest and then progresses to the more difficult. Thus he began by advising in secret. When that did not work he did so openly. And when that also had no impact he combined between the secret and public approaches. And the meaning of "And, behold" indicates the difference of conditions because open invitation is more severe than the secret approach and the combination of the two is more severe than any one of the two.⁴⁹

Al Alousi noted: "Ask your Sustainer to forgive your sins" by repentance from disbelief and disobedience because the Almighty does not forgive that partners should be associated with Him. Concerning "your Lord" he said; starting the process of asking for forgiveness "verily He is all-forgiving." Always forgiving in great abundance to the repentant. As if they reasoned and said; if we are indeed on the truth how can we abandon it. And if we are on falsehood how can Allah the Almighty accept us and deal with us gently after we indulged in it for a long time. Thus he ordered them with what would erase their past disobedience and draw to them benefit. Thus he promised them forgiveness with things that are dearer to them and nearer to their hearts than matters of the hereafter. That is to say what is contained in the verse, "He will shower upon you heavenly blessings" and others, their love for these worldly things to which they naturally incline. And the self is inflamed with what it likes. Qatadah said: they were a people who loved this world so he called to the hereafter through the means that they loved. It was further narrated that when they denied Nuh after repeated calls, Allah withheld the rain from them, made the wombs of their women-folk infertile for forty years. Some sources say for seventy years. He promised them if they believed, Allah would make them fertile and alleviate their hardship. This is reflected in the saying of Allah Almighty:

"HE WILL SHOWER UPON YOU HEAVENLY BLESSINGS ABUNDANT." (71:11) 50

The argument between Nuh and his people continued for a very long time as Allah records in the Quran:

"AND HE DWELT AMONG THEM A THOUSAND YEARS BAR FIFTY; AND THEN THE FLOODS OVERWHELMED THEM WHILE THEY WERE STILL LOST IN EVILDOING;" (29:14)

yet, despite this long and extended period only a very few of them believed in him.

And every time a generation was about to pass on they used to advise those who came after them not to believe in him but instead to confront and go against all that he taught. Hence, if a father informed his son and he understood it he used to advise that he and his sons should never ever believe in Nuh as long as they live and remained on the face of the earth.

Their nature rejected faith and the pursuit of truth. Thus:

"THEY WILL NOT GIVE BIRTH TO NOTHING BUT WICKEDNESS AND STUBBORN INGRATITUDE." (71:27)

"[BUT THE GREAT ONES] SAID: "O NUH! THOU HAST CONTENTED WITH US IN ARGUMENT, AND HAST [NEEDLESSLY] PROLONGED OUR CONTROVERSY: BRING UPON US, THEREFORE, THAT WITH WHICH THOU DOST THREATEN US, IF THOU ART A MAN OF TRUTH!"

"HE ANSWERED: ONLY GOD CAN BRING IT UPON YOU, IF HE SO WILL, AND YOU SHALL NOT ELUDE IT." (11:32-33)

That is to say, Allah is able to do so because nothing is beyond His ability. No affair inhibits Him, instead He is the one who says to a thing be and it is.

"FOR, MY ADVICE WILL NOT BENEFIT YOU — MUCH AS I DESIRE TO GIVE YOU GOOD ADVICE — IF IT BE GOD'S WILL THAT YOU SHALL REMAIN LOST IN GRIEVOUS ERROR. HE IS YOUR SUSTAINER, AND UNTO HIM YOU MUST RETURN." (11:34)

Meaning that whomsoever Allah wishes to test with misguidance, no one has the means to guide him. He is the one who guides whom He wills and causes to go astray whom He wills. He is the doer of whatev-

er He wills. He is the powerful and fully aware of who deserves the guidance and who deserves misguidance. He has the absolute wisdom and most compelling evidence.⁵¹

THE BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL RESULTS

Allamah Abdur Rahman ibn al Sa'adi recorded several benefits from this story:

That all the prophets from Nuh to Muhammad ﷺ called to pure Tawheed - monotheism and forbade Shirk - polytheism. Hence the first thing that Nuh and others said to their people was:

“WORSHIP GOD ALONE: YOU HAVE NO DEITY OTHER THAN HIM.” (7:59)
They repeated this basic call in numerous ways.

Another benefit was the ethics of propagation and how to perfect it. Nuh called his people night and day, secretly and openly at all times and under all circumstances, which he thought would ensure the success of his mission. He sought to encourage his people with tidings of immediate rewards and salvation from punishment and prosperity with wealth, sons and supervision over great provisions if only they believed. Apart from these, he further heralded news of the ultimate rewards in the hereafter and warned them of the consequences of disobedience. Like other prophets, Nuh remained eminently patient on this course. He addressed his people with kind and compassionate words and with every expression that attracts the hearts for what is required. He attested to the verses of Allah and all His evidences.

The story of Nuh demonstrates the virtues of the prophets, the arguments of their messages, and their sincerity to Allah Almighty in all their acts of worship to Him. Similar was the case in their additional worship to benefit the creation such as propagation, education and other related matters. As a result, they all voiced the same call and repeated it in the ears of their people. Each one of them saying; “And O my people, no benefit do I ask of you for this [message]; my reward rests with none but God.” Thus among the noblest virtues of the companions of the prophets was that they imitated their goodness. And Allah will accordingly raise them to a station in this life and the hereafter higher than that

attained by those who hankered after this world.⁵²

Al Qurtabi pointed out that the verse

“ASK YOUR SUSTAINER TO FORGIVE YOU YOUR SINS” (71:10) AND THAT IN SURAH AL HUD; “HENCE, O MY PEOPLE, ASK YOUR SUSTAINER TO FORGIVE YOUR SINS, AND THEN TURN TOWARDS HIM IN REPENTANCE – [WHEREUPON] HE WILL SHOWER UPON YOU HEAVENLY BLESSINGS ABUNDANT, AND WILL ADD STRENGTH TO YOUR STRENGTH: ONLY DO NOT TURN AWAY [FROM ME] AS PEOPLE LOST ON SIN!” (11:52)

are both evidence that the seeking of forgiveness brings about blessings and rain.

As for al Sha'abi, he recalls that on one occasion Umar prayed for rain and that he had hardly finished asking for forgiveness before the rain began to descend. The Muslims said to him; ‘we did not see you ask for rain?’ He replied; ‘I called for rain with the prayer that cause rain to pour out of the heavens; ‘Ask your Sustainer to forgive your sins.’ In this same regard ibn Sabih said; ‘A man once complained to al Hasan about the barrenness of the land. He advised him to seek forgiveness from Allah. Another man complained about poverty and again he told him to seek forgiveness from Allah. Still a third man asked him to pray that Allah would bless him with a son and he told him to seek forgiveness from Allah. Another complained about drought and its effect on his garden, al Hasan told him to seek forgiveness from Allah. We questioned him about this and he said; I have not said anything from myself, verily Allah says in Surah Nuh; ‘Ask your Sustainer for forgiveness....’⁵³

Al Hafiz in Fatih al Bari recalled that al Waqidi remarked; Wadd was in the image of a man, Suwa was in the image of a woman, Yaghuth in the image of a lion and Ya'uq in the image of a horse, and Nasr in the image of a bird. This is strange because it is well known that they were in the images of human beings and this was obtained from traditions concerning the reasons for the people worshipping them.⁵⁴

Ibn al Qayim wrote, the first thing that Satan engaged the idol worshippers with from one angle was their obsession with graves where they carved their inhabitants in order to remember them as Allah narrated their story in His book; ‘They said do not ever abandon your gods.’ Then he said that there are several reasons why Satan deceives the polytheists and engages them in the worship of idols. He cons people

according to the state of their minds. He called one group to worship them on the basis of honoring the dead who were embodied in these idols, as was the case of Nuh's people. Hence the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ cursed those who took graves as places of worship and light. He forbade praying to graves and he asked Allah not to make his grave an idol that would be worshipped. He ordered that graves should be leveled and statues destroyed. Yet the polytheists refused and instead contradicted him in all these matters.⁵⁵

NUH'S PRAYER AGAINST HIS PEOPLE AND ALLAH'S RESPONSE WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF THE UNBELIEVERS

Allah says;

AND THIS WE REVEALED UNTO NUH: "NEVER WILL ANY OF THY PEOPLE BELIEVE EXCEPT THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY ATTAINED TO FAITH. BE NOT, THEN, DISTRESSED BY ANYTHING THAT THEY MAY DO, BUT BUILD, UNDER OUR EYES AND ACCORDING TO OUR INSPIRATION, THE ARK [THAT SHALL SAVE THEE AND THOSE WHO FOLLOW THEE]; AND DO NOT APPEAL TO ME IN BEHALF OF THOSE WHO ARE BENT ON EVILDOING — FOR, BEHOLD, THEY ARE DESTINED TO BE DROWNED!"

AND [SO NUH] SET HIMSELF TO BUILDING THE ARK; AND EVERY TIME THE GREAT ONES OF HIS PEOPLE PASSED BY HIM, THEY SCOFFED AT HIM. [THEREUPON] HE SAID: "IF YOU ARE SCOFFING AT US — BEHOLD, WE ARE SCOFFING AT YOU [AND YOUR IGNORANCE], JUST AS YOU ARE SCOFFING AT US. BUT IN TIME YOU WILL COME TO KNOW WHO IT IS THAT [IN THIS WORLD] SHALL BE VISITED BY SUFFERING WHICH WILL COVER HIM WITH IGNOMINY, AND UPON WHOM LONG-LASTING SUFFERING SHALL ALIGHT [IN THE LIFE TO COME]!"

[AND SO IT WENT ON] TILL, WHEN OUR JUDGMENT CAME TO PASS, AND WATERS GUSHED FORTH IN TORRENTS OVER THE FACE OF THE EARTH, WE SAID [UNTO NUH]: "PLACE ON BOARD OF THIS [ARK] ONE PAIR OF EACH [KIND OF ANIMAL] OF EITHER SEX, AS WELL AS THY FAMILY — EXCEPT THOSE ON WHOM [OUR] SENTENCE HAS ALREADY BEEN PASSED — AND ALL [OTHERS] WHO HAVE ATTAINED TO FAITH!" — FOR, ONLY A FEW [OF NUH'S PEOPLE] SHARED HIS FAITH.

SO HE SAID [UNTO HIS FOLLOWERS]: "EMBARK IN THIS [SHIP]! IN THE NAME OF GOD BE ITS RUN AND ITS RIDING AT ANCHOR! BEHOLD, MY SUSTAINER IS INDEED MUCH-FORGIVING, A DISPENSER OF GRACE!" AND IT MOVED ON WITH TEM INTO WAVES THAT WERE LIKE MOUNTAINS. AND THAT [MOMENT] NUH CRIED OUT TO A SON OF HIS, WHO HAD KEPT HIMSELF ALOOF [FROM THE OTHERS]: "O MY DEAR SON! EMBARK WITH US, AND REMAIN NOT WITH THOSE WHO DENY THE TRUTH!"

[BUT THE SON ANSWERED; "I SHALL BETAKE MYSELF TO A MOUNTAIN THAT WILL PROTECT ME FROM THE WATERS." SAID [NUH]: "TODAY THERE IS NO PROTECTION [FOR ANYONE] FROM GOD'S JUDGMENT, SAVE [FOR] THOSE

WHO HAVE EARNED [HIS] MERCY!" AND A WAVE ROSE UP BETWEEN THEM, AND [THE SON] WAS AMONG THOSE WHO WERE DROWNED.

AND THE WORD WAS SPOKEN: "AWAY WITH THESE EVILDOING FOLK!" AND NUH CALLED OUT TO HIS SUSTAINER, AND SAID: "O MY SUSTAINER! VERILY, MY SON WAS OF MY FAMILY; AND, VERILY, THY PROMISE ALWAYS COMES TRUE, AND THOU ART THE MOST JUST OF ALL JUDGES!"

[GOD] ANSWERED: "O NUH, BEHOLD, HE WAS NOT OF THY FAMILY, FOR, VERILY, HE WAS UNRIGHTEOUS IN HIS CONDUCT. AND THOU SHALT NOT ASK OF ME ANYTHING WHEREOF THOU CANST NOT HAVE ANY KNOWLEDGE: THUS, BEHOLD, DO I ADMONISH THEE LEST THOU BECOME ONE OF THOSE WHO ARE UNAWARE [OF WHAT IS RIGHT].

SAID [NUH]; "O MY SUSTAINER! VERILY, I SEEK REFUGE WITH THEE FROM [EVER AGAIN] ASKING OF THEE ANYTHING WHEREOF I CANNOT HAVE ANY KNOWLEDGE! FOR UNLESS THOU GRANT ME FORGIVENESS AND BESTOW THY MERCY UPON ME, I SHALL BE AMONG THE LOST!"

[THEREUPON] THE WORD WAS SPOKEN: "O NUH! DISEMBARK IN PEACE FROM US, AND WITH [OUR] BLESSINGS UPON THEE AS WELL AS UPON THE PEOPLE [WHO ARE WITH THEE, AND THE RIGHTEOUS ONES THAT WILL SPRING FROM THEE AND] FROM THOSE WHO ARE WITH THEE. BUT [AS FOR THE UNRIGHTEOUS] FOLK [THAT WILL SPRING FROM YOU] – WE SHALL ALLOW THEM TO ENJOY LIFE [FOR A LITTLE WHILE], AND THEN THERE WILL BEFALL THEM GRIEVOUS SUFFERING FROM US." (11:36 - 48)

Ibn Kathir said: This is comfort for Nuh. That none of them will believe except those who were so destined; meaning who did not abuse you. Verily the help is near. It is an exceedingly strange piece of news. "But build, under Our eyes and according to Our inspiration, the ark [that shall save thee and those who follow thee]; and do not appeal to Me in behalf of those who are bent on evildoing – for, behold, they are destined to be drowned!"

Thus when Nuh gave up all hope that they would ever be reformed and be successful, when he saw there was no good in them, when they persisted in maltreating him, denying his message with every saying and action, he invoked upon them the anger of Allah. He answered his prayer and granted his request.

"AND, INDEED, [IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT] NUH CRIED UNTO US – AND HOW EXCELLENT WAS OUR RESPONSE: FOR WE SAVED HIM AND HIS HOUSEHOLD FROM THAT AWESOME CALAMITY." (37:75-6)

"AND NUH PRAYED; "O MY SUSTAINER! LEAVE NOT ON EARTH ANY OF THOSE WHO DENY THE TRUTH: FOR, BEHOLD, IF THOU DOST LEAVE THEM, THEY WILL [ALWAYS TRY TO] LEAD ASTRAY THOSE WHO WORSHIP THEE, AND WILL GIVE BIRTH TO NOTHING BUT WICKEDNESS AND STUBBORN INGRATITUDE. (71:26-7)

Thus their wrongdoing, disbelief and iniquity worked together against them with the prayer of their prophet.⁵⁶

"AND [SO NUH] SET HIMSELF TO BUILDING THE ARK; AND EVERY TIME THE GREAT ONES OF HIS PEOPLE PASSED BY HIM, THEY SCOFFED AT HIM. [THEREUPON] HE SAID: 'IF YOU ARE SCOFFING AT US – BEHOLD, WE ARE SCOFFING AT YOU [AND YOUR IGNORANCE], JUST AS YOU ARE SCOFFING AT US. BUT IN TIME YOU WILL COME TO KNOW WHO IT IS THAT [IN THIS WORLD] SHALL BE VISITED WITH SUFFERING WHICH WILL COVER HIM WITH IGNOMINY, AND UPON WHOM LONG-LASTING SUFFERING SHALL ALIGHT [IN THE LIFE TO COME]!' (11:38-9)

According to the author of al Manar, he began to build the ark as he was ordered "and every time the great ones of his people passed by him, they scoffed at him." They ridiculed and laughed at him claiming according to their judgment that he was afflicted by wild fantasy and madness. It was narrated that they used to ask him about what he was building and he used to reply that he was building a house that will move on water. This, of course, was unknown and unimaginable. Very few individuals precede the thought and awareness of the people of their age in terms of words and deeds without being ridiculed before attaining success.

"He said: "If you scoff at us – behold, we are scoffing at you", meaning we will scoff at you today because of your ignorance and tomorrow when you are visited with calamity. For if you do not know today what you are doing and what will be the result of our work "In time you will come to know" after it has been completed "who it is that [in this world] shall be visited by suffering which will cover him with ignominy." Meaning he will be humiliated, disgraced and ruined in this world. "And upon whom long-lasting suffering shall alight [in the life to come]!" The punishment of this world will be mild compared to it to the hereafter.

The former will finish and pass away with your destruction but the latter will remain and persist with your endurance.⁵⁷

Allah Almighty says:

“[AND SO IT WENT ON] TILL, WHEN OUR JUDGEMENT CAME TO PASS, AND WATERS GUSHED FORTH IN TORRENTS OVER THE FACE OF THE EARTH, WE SAID [UNTO NUH]: “PLACE ON BOARD OF THIS [ARK] ONE PAIR OF EACH [KIND OF ANIMAL] OF EITHER SEX, AS WELL AS THY FAMILY – EXCEPT THOSE ON WHOM [OUR] SENTENCE HAS ALREADY BEEN PASSED – AND ALL [OTHERS] WHO HAVE ATTAINED TO FAITH!” – FOR, ONLY A FEW [OF NUH’S PEOPLE] SHARED HIS FAITH.” (11:40)

Al Qurtubi noted that the scholars had seven different opinions of what was the “tanur”.

First: that it is the face of the earth.

Second: that it is the oven in which bread is baked.

Third: it is the place where water gathers in a ship.

Fourth: it is the break of dawn.

Fifth: it is al Kufa Mosque.

Sixth: that it is the highest peak on the earth.

Seventh: it is the spring on the peninsula.

According to al Nahas, these sayings are not contradictory because Allah Almighty informs us that the water came from the heavens and the earth. He said:

“AND SO WE CAUSED THE GATES OF HEAVEN TO OPEN WITH WATER POURING DOWN IN TORRENTS, AND CAUSED THE EARTH TO BURST FORTH WITH SPRINGS, SO THAT THE WATERS MET FOR A PURPOSE PRE-ORDAINED.” (54:11-2)

All these sayings concur that it was a sign, an outburst, and boiling.

“WE SAID [UNTO NUH]: “PLACE ON BOARD OF THIS [ARK] ONE PAIR OF EACH [KIN OF ANIMAL] OF EITHER SEX.” MEANING MALE AND FEMALE TO PRESERVE EACH SPECIES.⁵⁸ “AND ALL WERE DESTROYED EXCEPT THOSE ON WHOM [OUR] SENTENCE HAS ALREADY BEEN PASSED.” (11:40)

Shaykh Muhammad Rashid Rida explained, and carry in it the members

of your household, male and female. The members of a man’s household are his women, his children, and their spouses. It appears that the unbelievers from among them were exempted, if there were any unbelievers among them because they were included in Allah’s saying: “and do not appeal to Me on behalf of those who are bent on evildoing.”⁵⁹

Ibn Kathir wrote, and Allah submits to him [Nuh] that when His order is fulfilled and His punishment, which will not be lifted from those bent on evil, overtakes them nothing will change His command or reverse it. For perhaps Nuh may expect tenderness for His people when he sees the punishment descending upon them, but the reality is not the way as it is perceived.⁶⁰ He says: “and all [others] who have attained to faith!” – for, only a few [of Nuh’s people] shared his faith.”

Neither Allah nor His messenger clarified their number. All that the commentators of the Quran mentioned concerning them is inadmissible, as there is no supporting evidence. Ibn Jarir al Tabari observed, no clarification was made concerning the various kinds of animals that were carried in the ark, how Nuh carried and bore them in the ark. The story is, of course, told in great detail in the Book of Genesis. Our commentators have, however, identified ludicrous Israelite fables in it which, quite frankly, should not have been transmitted to preoccupy readers with them.⁶¹

“SO HE SAID [UNTO HIS FOLLOWERS]: “EMBARK IN THIS [SHIP]! IN THE NAME OF GOD BE ITS RUN AND ITS RIDING AT ANCHOR! BEHOLD, MY SUSTAINER IN INDEED MUCH-FORGIVING, A DISPENSER OF GRACE!” AL ZAMAKHSHARI SUGGESTED THIS VERSE MEANS, ENTER SAYING ALLAH OR IN THE NAME OF ALLAH AT THE TIME OF ITS MOVEMENT AND ITS ANCHORING. IT WAS NARRATED THAT IF HE WANTED IT TO MOVE HE USED TO SAY; IN THE NAME OF ALLAH IT SETS FORTH AND IF HE WANTED IT TO ANCHOR HE USED TO SAY IN THE NAME OF ALLAH IT IS FIXED. IT IS ALLOWED TO INSERT THE NAME AS HIS SAYING: THE NAME PEACE BE UPON YOU. AND ALLAH INTENDS BY ITS MOVEMENT AND ANCHORING BY HIS POWER AND COMMAND.⁶²

“BEHOLD, MY SUSTAINER IS INDEED MUCH-FORGIVING, A DISPENSER OF GRACE!” THAT IS TO SAY WITHOUT HIS FORGIVENESS OF YOUR SINS AND HIS MERCY, YOU WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SAVED.

"AND IT MOVED WITH THEM INTO WAVES THAT WERE LIKE MOUNTAINS. AND [THAT] MOMENT NUH CRIED OUT TO A SON OF HIS, WHO HAD KEPT HIMSELF ALOOF [FROM THE OTHERS]: O MY DEAR SON! EMBARK WITH US, AND REMAIN NOT WITH THOSE WHO DENY THE TRUTH."

Al Qasimi mentioned that was because when the doors of the heavens were opened with water and the springs of the earth erupted, the water swelled and submerged the peaks of the earth and it rose above the tallest mountains. And, as the water rose it was accompanied with waves as huge as mountains.

"And that [moment] Nuh cried out to a son of his, who had kept himself aloof [from the others]." Meaning removed from his father. "O my dear son! Embark with us" That is to say; enter into our religion and join us in the ark, "and remain not with those who deny the truth."

He said; "I shall betake myself to a mountain that shall protect me from the waters." Hence I would not be drowned. Nuh said; "Today there is no protection [for anyone] from God's judgment, save [for] those who have earned [His] mercy!" Meaning there is no protection from His calamity, the flood, except the merciful, who is Allah Almighty. Or there is no deliverance except the place of those who were shown mercy. They are the believers, in the ark. Or no deliverance meaning none will be saved except whom was shown mercy by Allah.

"And a wave rose up between them, and [the son] was among those who were drowned." In this there is evidence that all unbelievers will be destroyed. That is a matter that has been decided, destined to happen and in no need for explanation.⁶³

"And the word was spoken: 'O earth, swallow up thy waters! And, O sky, cease [thy rain]!' And the waters sank into the earth, and the will [of God] was done, and the ark came to rest on Mount Judi. And the word was spoken; 'Away with these evildoing folk!'

According to Ibn Kathir Allah informs that when he drowned all the inhabitants of the earth except the people in the ark, he ordered the earth to swallow up the waters that sprung from it and gathered upon it. He also ordered the sky to cease its rain "and the waters subsided" and "the will of God was done." That is the earth was cleared of all those who disbelieved in Allah. Nothing remained of them. And the ship with those

it contained "came to rest" on Mount Judi. Mujahid pointed out it is a mountain in the Arab peninsula.⁶⁴

Al Zamakhshari wrote, and this monstrous delinquency occurred because He permitted as He willed without any restraint; as if they were a discerning rational people who knew His majesty, His rewards, punishments and power to do everything. At the same time it was made clear to them the necessity of submitting to and obeying Him. Yet they were loath to desist and conform immediately by following His will without any hesitation.⁶⁵

And Nuh called out to his Sustainer, and said:

"O MY SUSTAINER! VERILY, MY SON WAS OF MY FAMILY; AND, VERILY, THY PROMISE ALWAYS COMES TRUE, AND THOU ART THE MOST JUST OF ALL JUDGES!"

[GOD] ANSWERED: "O NUH, BEHOLD, HE WAS NOT OF THY FAMILY, FOR, VERILY, HE WAS UNRIGHTEOUS IN HIS CONDUCT. AND THOU SHALT NOT ASK OF ME ANYTHING WHEREOF THOU CANST NOT HAVE ANY KNOWLEDGE: THUS, BEHOLD DO I ADMONISH THEE LEST THOU BECOME ONE OF THOSE WHO ARE UNAWARE [OF WHAT IS RIGHT]. (11:45-6)

Al Qasimi explained, know that Nuh was carried away by fatherly compassion and kindred emotion by requesting his deliverance because of the great attachment with his son and concern for his wellbeing. Yet, he observed all the ethics and asked in the best manner. He said; 'Thy promise always comes true.' He did not say; do not break your promise of deliverance for my family. Indeed he said this according to his own understanding of close relatives and formal kindred ties. He ignored and expressed his sorrow for his son whom Allah had exempted with His saying: "Except those upon whom [Our] sentence has already been passed." And it had not yet occurred that his son will be the one upon whom the sentence will be passed. He sought the compassion and mercy of his Lord saying: "Thou art the most just of all judges." Except that the All Knowing, Just and Wise does not break His promise. He answered: "O Nuh, behold, he was not of thy family." Meaning those whom have been promised deliverance. Indeed they are exempted because of their disbelief or they were never among them because the scope of kinship is religious closeness and not the relationship between a believer and unbeliever.

Allah's saying, "He was unrighteous in his conduct" clarifies the negation of him being among his relatives because he was unrighteous. It indicates that his relatives are the upright and righteous of his religion and divine code. And, that because of his indulgence in corruption and sin it was as if he was the embodiment of evil conduct. There is also a suggestion here that the cause of deliverance is nothing except righteousness and not kinship to someone according to appearance. For who has no goodness there is no salvation for him and this is the secret for the use of the word "unrighteous" instead of corruption.

"And thou shalt not ask Me anything whereof thou canst not have any knowledge." Meaning, do not petition Me any request or favor you do not know of its correctness or incorrectness.

"Thus, behold, do I admonish thee lest thou become one of those who are unaware [of what is right]." That is I forbid you from being among them with your petition to Me as long as you do not know. At that point Prophet Nuh became aware of the divine admonition and rebuke hence he sought redress saying: "O My Sustainer! Verily, I seek refuge with Thee from [ever again] asking of Thee anything whereof I cannot have any knowledge! For unless Thou grant me forgiveness and bestow Thy mercy upon me I shall be among the lost!"⁶⁶

"[Thereupon] the word was spoken: O Nuh! Disembark in peace from Us, and with [Our] blessings upon thee as well as upon the people [who are with thee, and the righteous ones that will spring from thee and] from those who are with thee. But [as for the unrighteous] folk [that will spring from you] – We shall allow them to enjoy life [for a little while], and then there will befall them grievous suffering from Us."

Al Zamakhshari explained, the meaning is that peace and blessings from Us will be upon you and upon the believing nations who descend from those who are with you. And from those who are with you there would be nations who will enjoy this world but will end in the fire. And Nuh was the father of the prophets and the creation who sprang from him after the flood and from those who were with him in the ark.⁶⁷

THE BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL RESULTS

Sayid Qutb wrote, the relation upon which people are gathered in this religion is unique. One with which the nature of this religion distinguishes itself. It is related to the horizons, furthest realms, distances, and goals that this gracious divine programme is specialized with. This connection is not that of kinship and blood. It is not a relation of land and country, people and tribe, color and language, sex and race or even occupation and class. All of these connections may be found and then the relation may be severed between one individual and another as Allah Almighty says to His servant Nuh when the latter called out and said: "O my Sustainer! Verily, my son was of my family." Allah answered: "O Nuh, behold, he was not of thy family." Then He explained to him why his son was not of his family: "For, verily, he was unrighteous in his conduct." Indeed the connection of faith between you may be severed O Nuh. Hence, "thou shalt not ask Me anything whereof thou canst not have any knowledge." You consider him from your family but your assessment is wrong. For what is certain is that he is not from your family even if he is your son from your very loins."⁶⁸

Sayid Qutb added, then we have our last stand with the story of Nuh to witness the value of that handful of believers in the scale of Allah. A handful of Muslims from Nuh's followers of whom some stories say they were only twelve. They were the fruits of Nuh's mission after nine hundred and fifty years as confirmed in the one authentic source concerning this matter. This handful, the fruits of that long life and protracted struggle, deserved that Allah should have changed what they were accustomed to in the features of the universe by setting in motion for them that flood which overwhelmed everything and every living creature throughout the realm of the earth at that time. They deserved that Allah should make them, small in number as they were, the inheritors of the earth after and the seeds of civilization in it and its new successors.⁶⁹

Al Qasimi observed, some have reported concerning the widespread nature of the flood and its impact: verily the waters of the flood left a strange impact on the visible levels of the earth. In some places sea residue mixed with shells were found at the peaks of mountains. In the

plains and deserts the remains of animals were found and vegetation was mixed with marine elements some on the surface and others buried nearby. Bones of various animals identified with certain environments were discovered in caves far away from their natural habitats with the remains of industrial tools and human traces. All the evidence indicated that the flood led them to those places. They were gathered forcefully and exterminated. They merged with the layers of clay, formed stones, and remained evidence of what occurred by the order of the Creator.⁷⁰

Allamah al Sa'adi pointed out it is necessary to seek the help of Allah and remember His name when mounting or alighting from an animal in all circumstances and movement. Likewise, Allah should be praised and remembered much for His favors, especially deliverance from trials and calamity. As Allah says; "So he [Nuh] said unto his followers: "Embark in this [ship]! In the name of God be its run and its riding at anchor!" He also said; "And as soon as thou and those who are with thee are settled in the ark, say: "All praise is due to God, who has saved us from those evildoing folk!"(23:28) Similarly, it is necessary to pray for blessing in temporary abodes such as the places of rest during travel or others including permanent residences and homes. Allah says: "And say: 'O my Sustainer! Cause me to reach a destination blessed [by Thee] – for Thou art the best to show man how to reach his [true] destination!"(23:29) All of this comes from seeking company in the remembrance of Allah and from the power over movement and stillness. It also flows from the strength of confidence in Allah and the descent of His blessings, which are the best that can accompany a servant in all conditions and from which he would be incapable of turning his eyes away from.

Among the benefits of the story of Nuh is its confirmation that prophets and believers are the people who would be delivered from general punishment in this world. As for those who would be afflicted, they are the miscreants, and whoever of their offspring that followed them and the animals even though they had no sins. That is because the retribution that Allah brought down on the various liars included children and animals. With regard to what was mentioned in some Israelite fables that when Allah decided to destroy the people of Nuh and others He caused their womenfolk to become barren so that their children would not be afflicted with the punishment, this has no basis

and is in fact contrary to what is known and verified by Allah's saying: "And beware of the temptation to evil which does not befall only those among you who are bent on denying the truth, to the exclusion of others."(8:25)

Allamah Muhammad Rashid Rida wrote, verily Allah rewards people in this world and in the hereafter according to their faith and deeds and not by their ancestry. None would be shown affection because of their righteous fathers and grandfathers even if they were among the messengers and prophets. And if any of these fathers were to ask of Him what was contrary to His custom, law and wisdom about His creation, such an individual would have sinned and thus deserve rebuke until he repented and returned to the correct way.⁷¹

Al Qurtabi also commented on this verse; "O Nuh, behold, he was not of thy family, for, verily, he was unrighteous in his conduct." He noted that it contained some measure of empathy for people whose sons were corrupt, even though they were righteousness. In it also is evidence that a son is from the family linguistically and legally and is also from the household. Whoever recommends his family includes in that his children and all the members of his household. Allah says in another verse: "And, indeed, [it was for this reason that] Nuh cried unto Us – and how excellent was Our response: for We saved him and his household from that awesome calamity." (37:75-6) Thus all who were included in his household were called his family.⁷²

THE STORY OF IBRAHIM ﷺ THE FRIEND OF THE MOST GRACIOUS

IBRAHIM'S⁷³ VIRTUES

Allah Almighty praised him saying:

“VERILY, IBRAHIM WAS A MAN WHO COMBINED WITHIN HIMSELF ALL VIRTUES, DEVOUTLY OBEYING GOD’S WILL, TURNING AWAY FROM ALL THAT IS FALSE, AND NOT BEING OF THOSE WHO AScribe DIVINITY TO AUGHT BESIDE GOD: [FOR HE WAS ALWAYS] GRATEFUL FOR THE BLESSINGS GRANTED BY HIM WHO HAD ELECTED HIM AND GUIDED HIM ONTO A STRAIGHT WAY. AND SO WE VOUCHSAFED HIM GOOD IN THIS WORLD; AND, VERILY, IN THE LIFE TO COME [TOO] HE SHALL FIND HIMSELF AMONG THE RIGHTEOUS. AND LASTLY, WE HAVE INSPIRED THEE, [O MUHAMMAD, WITH THIS MESSAGE;] “FOLLOW THE CREED OF IBRAHIM, WHO TUNED AWAY FROM ALL THAT IS FALSE, AND WAS NOT OF THOSE WHO AScribe DIVINITY TO AUGHT BESIDE GOD.” (16:120-3)

And Allah's saying

“UMMAH” MEANING MODEL AND LEADER AS IN: “BEHOLD, I SHALL MAKE THEE A LEADER OF MEN.” (2:124)

On the above verse Al Qasim explained that Ibrahim was by himself a nation from among the nations because he embodied perfections not found in any other individual.⁷⁴ He was submissive and obedient to Allah, fulfilling out whatever He ordered him. He rejected every false religion and embraced the religion of truth. Ibrahim was always grateful to Allah for His favors. He worshipped of Allah alone without associating partners with Him according to a pleasant law.

Allah says:

“IBRAHIM WAS NEITHER A “JEW” NOR A “CHRISTIAN”, BUT WAS ONE WHO TURNED AWAY FROM ALL THAT IS FALSE, HAVING SURRENDERED HIMSELF UNTO GOD; AND HE WAS NOT OF THOSE WHO AScribe DIVINITY TO AUGHT BESIDE HIM.” (3:67)

This verse according to Ibn Kathir explains that Ibrahim was on the correct religion of God that is the movement to sincerity and conscious deviation from falsehood, which is contrary to Judaism, Christianity and

polytheism.⁷⁵

Elsewhere in the Quran Allah says:

“AND OF IBRAHIM, WHO TO HIS TRUST WAS TRUE.” (53:37)

He was true in all that he was ordered and he established all the articles and divisions of faith.

AND; “REMEMBER WHEN HIS SUSTAINER TRIED IBRAHIM BY [HIS] COMMANDMENTS AND THE LATTER FULFILLED THEM, HE SAID: “BEHOLD, I SHALL MAKE THEE A LEADER OF MEN.” IBRAHIM ASKED; “AND [WILT THOU MAKE LEADERS] OF MY OFFSPRING AS WELL?” GOD ANSWERED: “MY COVENANT DOES NOT EMBRACE THE EVILDOERS.” (2:124)

Al Qurtubi noted, the scholars by their various pronouncements differed as to the connotation of the word “kalimat” (commandments). One view is that it implied the laws of Islam. Others added that it also involves enjoining right and forbidding evil. Some scholars were of the view that it concerned his sacrifice of his son. Another view is that it referred to the execution of his mission. All of these according to al Qurtubi are very close in meaning.⁷⁶

Ibn Kathir wrote, when Ibrahim fulfilled the things that Allah ordered him to do, He made him a leader of men. They followed him and adhered to his leadership. Ibrahim asked Allah that this leadership may be extended to his offspring and that it should remain with them, eternally after him.

His request was granted and the leadership was handed to him. It, however, specified that the evildoers would not enjoy this favor. Instead, it affirmed that the leadership would be bestowed upon his learned offspring who practice their teachings.⁷⁷

Ibrahim was one of the prophets of great resolve whose names were specially mentioned from among all the prophets in the two verses of Surahs al Ahzab (7) and al Shura (13).

Ibn Kathir held the view that after Muhammad ﷺ, Ibrahim was the noblest of the prophets of great resolve. He was, in fact, the one whom Prophet Muhammad ﷺ met in the seventh heaven supporting with his back the Bayt al Ma'amur into which seventy thousand angels enter daily.⁷⁸ Each heaven according to ibn Kathir has a ka'aba or house of worship for its inhabitants. The Bayt al Ma'amur is the ka'aba of the

seventh heaven. (see tafsir Surah al Tur, verse 4).

Likewise the hadith narrated by Abi ibn Ka'ab; "And I delayed the third to a day when all the creation including Ibrahim would desire me."⁷⁹

And because Ibrahim was the most excellent of the prophets after Muhammad, the Muslim worshipper is enjoined to affirm in his testimony what was confirmed by Imams Bukhari and Muslim in the hadith narrated by Ka'ab ibn Ajrah and others. He said; "We said, O messenger of Allah we know this greetings of peace upon you, but how do we send prayers upon thee.' He said; say: 'O Allah! Exalt Muhammad and the people of Muhammad, as Thou didst exalt Ibrahim and the people of Ibrahim. And bless Muhammad and the people of Muhammad as thou didst bless Ibrahim and the people of Ibrahim, verily thou art praiseworthy, and glorious.⁸⁰

Moreover, of all the prophets, Ibrahim ﷺ resembled Prophet Muhammad ﷺ the most as Imam Bukahri recorded him saying, "As for Ibrahim, then look upon your master." Meaning himself Muhammad ﷺ.

Among Ibrahim's other virtues is that he was Khalil al Rahman – the friend of Allah, the most Compassionate. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ shared with him this distinction. Allah Almighty says:

"AND WHO COULD BE OF BETTER FAITH THAN HE WHO SURRENDERS HIS WHOLE BEING UNTO GOD AND IS A DOER OF GOOD WITHAL, AND FOLLOWS THE CREED OF IBRAHIM, WHO TURNED AWAY FROM ALL THAT IS FALSE – SEEING THAT GOD EXALTED IBRAHIM WITH HIS LOVE?" (4:125)

"Al Khulah" is the highest degree of love. Hence the Prophet Muhammad said: "O people, if ever I should take a bosom friend other than my Lord, I would have taken Abu Bakr as that friend. But suffice is the brotherhood of Islam."⁸¹

Yet another of Ibrahim's virtues was that Allah allowed prophethood and revelation to continue among his descendants. Allah says;

"AND WE CAUSED PROPHETHOOD AND REVELATION TO CONTINUE AMONG HIS OFFSPRING." (29:27)

"AND WE BESTOWED UPON HIM ISSAC AND JACOB; AND WE GUIDED EACH OF THEM AS WE HAD GUIDED NUH AFORETIME. AND OUT OF HIS OFFSPRING, [WE BESTOWED PROPHETHOOD UPON] DAVID, AND SOLOMON,

AND JOB, AND JOSEPH, AND MUSA, AND AARON: FOR THUS DO WE REWARD THE DOERS OF GOOD; AND [UPON] ZACHARIAH, AND JOHN, AND EESA, AND ELIJAH; EVERY ONE OF THEM DID WE FAVOR ABOVE OTHER PEOPLE." (6:84-6)

Allah gathered these virtues in both Nuh and Ibrahim. He said;

"AND, INDEED, [TO THE SAME END] WE SENT FORTH NUH AND IBRAHIM [AS OUR MESSAGE-BEARERS], AND ESTABLISHED PROPHETHOOD AND REVELATION AMONG THEIR DESCENDANTS." (57:26)

Ibn Kathir pointed out that every book, which was revealed from the heavens upon a prophet after Ibrahim was given to one of his offspring and descendants. This was a traditional honor that is incomparable and a station of distinction that cannot be claimed. That was because two great sons were born to him. Ismail from Hajar and Issac from Sarah, to whom Jacob (Israel) was born. All the tribes connect themselves to him and there was prophethood among them. They were so many prophets that their exact number is not known except those who were distinguished with revelation. Prophethood in the progeny of Issac was sealed with Eesa the son of Mary from the Children of Israel.

As for Ismail, his offspring were the Arabs with all their various tribes. There were no prophets from his descendants except Muhammad ibn Abdullah the absolute seal and master of all prophets and pride Adam's children in this world and in the next. Indeed, there was none from this noble branch and sublime source except this splendid jewel, this brilliant example, and link of the magnificent chain.⁸²

Another of Ibrahim's virtues is that he would be the first to be clothed on the Day of Judgement. Ibn Abbas narrated that the prophet ﷺ said; "Verily you would be raised barefooted, naked and uncircumcised. Then he recited; "On that Day We shall roll up the skies as written scrolls are rolled up; [and] as We brought into being the first creation, so We shall bring it forth anew – a promise which We have willed upon Ourselves; for, behold, We are able to do [all things]!" (21:104) And the first to be clothed on the Day of Judgment would be Ibrahim.⁸³

Al Hafiz explained that the wisdom in Ibrahim's distinction related to the fact that he was thrown into the fire naked. It was also said that he was the first person ever to wear pants. None of these attributes, howev-

er, suggest that he enjoyed preference over Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. That is because the one who is shown preference may be distinguished with something that is special to him though that still does not indicate absolute preference. Ibrahim was, nevertheless, accredited with other favors. Among them, he was the first to entertain the guest, cut the moustache, circumcise, and witness gray hair.⁸⁴

Ibrahim was distinguished also because he never lied except on three occasions. Two of these concerned the nature of Allah. Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said; "Ibrahim never lied except on three occasions."⁸⁵

In this regard al Hafiz mentioned the long hadith of Abi Za'arah on the authority of Abu Hurayrah concerning intercession. It refers to Ibrahim and mentioned his lies while adding certain features to the story notably his statement about the stars; "This is my Sustainer!" (6:76) And his reply when asked if he broke the idols he declared; "Nay, it was this one, the biggest of them, that did it." And likewise, "Verily, I am sick [at heart]."

According to al Qurtubi the mention of the stars suggests that there were actually four lies. They are briefly mentioned in the narration of ibn Sirin. What appears to be the fancy of some narrators is their mention of Ibrahim's statement concerning the stars, instead of that about Sarah. Yet, what the various accounts agree upon is the mention of Sarah and not the stars, as if it was not considered even though there were suggestions that Sarah was mentioned when still young. Accordingly, it did not count because childhood is not a condition of legal responsibility. This is according to ibn Ishaq. Another view, however, is that Ibrahim said it after he attained maturity but he said it in the way of questioning in which he intended reproach. Besides, it is believed that he said it in a way of protest against his people, pointing out that that which changes cannot be entitled to Lordship. This is the view of the majority. That he said it as a form of rebuke or mockery of his people. As a result, it is not counted in the lies. Alternatively, the word lie should be ascribed to the cases mentioned. That he should have said something believed by the listener to be a lie though if examined carefully is not a lie because it is from the point of view of possible differences of the two matters. Thus it was not actually a lie.

Ibn 'Uqayl noted that reasoning of the mind rejects the seeming lie

ascribed to Ibrahim. That is because the mind is convinced of the need for the prophet to be trustworthy so that the truth that he brought from Allah would be known. There would be no trust if he were associated with a lie. Hence, how can an actual lie be ascribed to him. This was apparently accredited to him because it seemed this way to the listener, and according to his assessment this never came from Ibrahim - that is calling this action a lie - except in a situation of extreme fear because of his esteemed position. On the other hand, an absolute lie in such circumstances is allowed and, indeed, necessary in order to put up with the lesser of two evils in the face of their seriousness. As for calling them lies they should not be blameworthy for even though a lie may be disgraceful and immoral it may be better in some situations and this is an example.⁸⁶

An Nawawi explained that the scholars agree if an oppressor comes in search of someone who is hiding in order to kill him or demands a person's possessions to seize it by force, it is obligatory that anyone who knows about them should conceal them and deny this knowledge. This type of lie is not only allowed but is mandatory because it is done to repel an oppressor. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ pointed out that this type of lying is not included in uncontrolled disgraceful lies.⁸⁷

Among the attributes of Ibrahim is that narrated by Anas ibn Malik. Anas b. Malik reported that a person came to Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) and said: O, the best of creation; thereupon Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: He is Ibrahim (peace be upon him)."⁸⁸

Concerning this hadith Imam Al Nawawi explained that the Prophet made this remark out of humility and respect to Ibrahim for his friendship and fatherhood. Notwithstanding, our Prophet Muhammad is the best as he once declared; "I am the master of the sons of Adam." He did not intend disdain for or non-recognition of his predecessors. Instead, he said this to clarify what he was ordered to explain and deliver. For this reason Prophet ﷺ said, "And there is no pride in my statement" in order to dispel what may occur to some absurd minds. It is believed that the Prophet may have said; "Ibrahim is the best of mankind before he knew that he was the master of Adam's progeny.⁸⁹

Among Ibrahim's virtues also is that Allah elevated him with knowledge, conviction and powerful arguments.

"AND THUS WE GAVE IBRAHIM [HIS FIRST] INSIGHT INTO [GOD'S] MIGHTY DOMINION OVER THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH - AND [THIS] TO THE END THAT HE MIGHT BECOME ONE OF THOSE WHO ARE INWARDLY SURE." (8:75)

THE QURAN ALSO STATES; "AND THIS WAS OUR ARGUMENT WHICH WE VOUCHSAFED UNTO IBRAHIM AGAINST HIS PEOPLE: [FOR] WE DO RAISE BY DEGREE WHOM WE WILL. VERILY, THY SUSTAINER IS WISE, ALL-KNOWING." (8:83)

From his longing to reach the goal of knowledge and its end he asked his Lord; "And, lo, Ibrahim said;

"O MY SUSTAINER! SHOW ME HOW THOU GIVEST LIFE UNTO THE DEAD!" SAID HE: TAKE, THEN, FOUR BIRDS AND TEACH THEM TO OBEY THEE; THEN PLACE THEM SEPARATELY ON EVERY HILL [AROUND THEE]; THEN SUMMON ON THEM; THEY WILL COME FLYING TO THEE. AND KNOW THAT GOD IS ALMIGHTY, WISE." (2:260)

Still among his virtues also is the fact that Allah has made it binding upon Muslims to follow his creed and adhere to his way. Muhammad ibn

Nasir al Sa'adi wrote it must be known that we are specially bounded by all that Allah narrates to us about Ibrahim. Allah says; "the creed of your forefather Ibrahim." Meaning, adhere to it. "And lastly, We have inspired thee, [O Muhammad, with this message:] "Follow the creed of

Ibrahim, who turned away from all that is false." (16:123) "Indeed, you have had a good example in Ibrahim and those who followed him, when they said unto their [idolatrous] people:

"VERILY, WE ARE QUIT OF YOU AND ALL THAT YOU WORSHIP INSTEAD OF GOD: WE DENY THE TRUTH OF WHATEVER YOU BELIEVE; AND BETWEEN US AND YOU THERE HAS ARISEN ENMITY AND HATRED, TO LAST UNTIL SUCH A TIME AS YOU COME TO BELIEVE IN THE ONE GOD!" (60:4)

The only exception was his words to his unbelieving father; "I shall indeed pray for [God's] forgiveness for thee." This, of course, should not be emulated by seeking forgiveness for those who associate partners with Allah. Ibrahim's seeking forgiveness for his father was part of a promise given to him by Allah. When, however, it became clear to him that his father was an enemy of Allah, Ibrahim disassociated himself from him. 90

Another virtue was that Allah chose him and his son Ismail to build the Ancient House. Allah also answered his prayer, which was realized in the community of Muhammad ﷺ.

Allah Almighty says;

"AND WHEN IBRAHIM AND ISMAIL WERE RAISING THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE TEMPLE, [THEY PRAYED:] "O OUR SUSTAINER! ACCEPT THOU THIS FROM US: FOR, VERILY, THOU ALONE ART ALL-HEARING, ALL-KNOWING!" (2:127)

There is no authentic hadith from the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that the House (Ka'aba) was built before the time of Ibrahim. Whoever holds on to the saying "the site of the House" is not intelligent or knowledgeable because what is meant by its site is determined by the knowledge of Allah and His great power with the prophets is its place from the time of Adam to the time of Ibrahim. Allah says;

"BEHOLD, THE FIRST TEMPLE EVER SET UP FOR MANKIND WAS INDEED THE ONE AT BAAKKAH: RICH IN BLESSING, AND A [SOURCE OF] GUIDANCE UNTO ALL THE WORLDS." (3:96)

This verse means that the first place of worship placed for the generality of mankind for blessings and guidance is that which is in Bakkah (Makkah). Some say the place of the Ka'aba. "It is full of clear messages." That it was built by Ibrahim, the Friend of Allah, father of the prophets after him, and leader of the upright offspring of his son who follow him and adhere to his traditions. Thus Allah says;

"[IT IS] THE PLACE WHEREON IBRAHIM ONCE STOOD."

Meaning the stone upon which he stood when he raised the house from its foundation. His son had placed this famous stone for him so that he could stand on it when the building became above his height. The understanding, therefore, is that Ibrahim built the most majestic mosque in the most distinguished location in a barren valley and prayed for his family to be blessed and that they should be bestowed with fruits despite the lack of water and absence of trees. And besides, that he should make it a sacred precinct, safe and protected. Allah answered his prayer and granted his request. The Quran reads;

"WHY – HAVE WE NOT ESTABLISHED FOR THEM A SANCTUARY SECURE, TO WHICH, AS A PROVISION FROM US, SHALL BE GATHERED THE FRUITS OF ALL [GOOD] THINGS?" (28:57)

Ibrahim asked Allah to raise from among his offspring a prophet, on who spoke their language, pure and profound to complete the favors upon them in this world and in the next with happiness. Allah answered him and raised among them a messenger, through whom he sealed the long line of all the prophets. Additionally, He perfected for him religion in a manner that was not granted to any of the prophets before him.⁹¹

THE PRAYER OF IBRAHIM FOR HIS FATHER

Ibrahim began his supplication to Allah with a prayer for his father as he was the closest person to him and the most deserving of whatever good he had. This our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also did as the Quran states; "And warn [whomever thou canst reach, beginning with] thy kinsfolk." (26:214) There was in his prayers an observation of the ethics of giving advice, good manners, and a strong line of reasoning. At the same time he was patient and forbearing with all the chastisement he suffered in the course of delivering his message. Those who call to Islam must learn from this.

Allah says:

"AND CALL TO MIND, THROUGH THIS DIVINE WRIT, IBRAHIM. BEHOLD, HE WAS A MAN OF TRUTH, [ALREADY] A PROPHET WHEN HE SPOKE [THUS] UNTO HIS FATHER: "O MY FATHER! WHY DOST THOU WORSHIP SOMETHING THAT NEITHER HEARS NOR SEES AND CAN BE OF NO AVAIL WHATEVER TO THEE." (19:41-42)

Abu Saud noted, Ibrahim adopted in his call the best method and most upright way. He protested with the most creative protest with good manners and beautiful conduct so that he did not trod the way of arrogance and stubbornness. Thus, he never diverted from the method of good conduct.⁹²

For if the worshipped does not hear, see nor benefit the worshipper in any way, then what is the point of it being worshipped. Indeed it is more imperfect and incapable than those who worship it. This is the strongest evidence to discredit and prevent this kind of worship. Then when he refuted its worship and its service it was as if he said; and what should be the way therefore? He said;

"O MY FATHER! BEHOLD, THERE HAS INDEED COME TO ME [A RAY] OF KNOWLEDGE SUCH AS HAS NEVER YET COME UNTO THEE: FOLLOW ME, THEN; I SHALL GUIDE THEE ONTO A PERFECT WAY." (19:43)

Al Zamakhshari wrote, Ibrahim persuaded others to the truth with his message of compassion and kindness. He did not disown his father by ascribing to him absolute ignorance or claiming for himself superior knowledge. Instead he said; verily I have some knowledge and some of it you do not have. It is the knowledge that leads to the straight path. So

do not be disdainful, you and I are on the same journey and I have the knowledge of the way that you know not. Therefore follow me and I will save you from going astray and becoming lost.⁹³ Then he said;

“O MY FATHER! DO NOT WORSHIP SATAN – FOR VERILY, SATAN IS A REBEL AGAINST THE MOST GRACIOUS!” (19:44)

Al Qasimi said; three times did he discourage and deter him from what he was doing by presenting him in a manner that every rational person dislikes, explaining that he is unable to benefit anyone but instead attracts great harm. Hence he is in reality worshipping the devil.⁹⁴ Then he said;

“O MY FATHER! I DREAD LEST A CHASTISEMENT FROM THE MOST GRACIOUS BEFALL THEE, AND THEN THOU WILT BECOME [AWARE OF HAVING BEEN] CLOSE UNTO SATAN!” (19:45)

Al Zamakhshari further explained that he continued to warn him of an evil punishment because of what he was involved in. But even so, frankly that the punishment would befall him. Instead he said; “O my father! I dread lest a chastisement from the Most Gracious befall thee.” In effect he mentioned his fear and the misfortune and negated the punishment and made the friendship of Satan and entrance into the ranks of his adherents and companions worse than the punishment. Each one of the four advices were accompanied with the saying, “O my father” in kind compassion and fervent plea to him.

“HE ANSWERED: DOST THOU DISLIKE MY GODS, O IBRAHIM? INDEED, IF THOU DESIST NOT, I SHALL MOST CERTAINLY CAUSE THEE TO BE STONED TO DEATH! NOW BEGONE FROM ME FOR GOOD!”

[IBRAHIM] REPLIED: “PEACE BE UPON THEE! I SHALL ASK MY SUSTAINER TO FORGIVE THEE: FOR, BEHOLD, HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN KIND UNTO ME.” (19:46-7)

Al Shinqiti stated, Allah Almighty clarifies in these two gracious verses that when Ibrahim gave his father this advise with all that it contained in terms of kindness, gentility, clarification of the truth and warning from worshipping that which could neither hear nor see and from the punishment of Allah Almighty and friendship with the devil, he addressed him with this severe sermon and called him by his name. But Ibrahim’s father

did not say to him in return O my dear son as Ibrahim had said “O my father.” Indeed he detested that Ibrahim should oppose and reject the worship of idols. That was because Ibrahim did not worship except Allah Almighty alone. He threatened him that if he did not desist from his preaching he would pelt him. Some sources say with stones others say with abusive words. The first seems more likely. Then he ordered him to begone away from him forever. Yet again, Ibrahim met his insult with kindness and gentility. He said, peace be upon you. I shall ask my Sustainer to forgive thee.

As for ibn Kathir, he wrote: “peace be upon you”; that is to say nothing evil will be sent forth to you from me. I shall not hurt you. Instead your well-being is guaranteed from my side. Actually, he increased him in kindness and said; “I shall ask my Sustainer to forgive thee: for, behold, He has always been kind unto me.” Perhaps Ibrahim did seek forgiveness for him as he promised in his supplications. Later when it became clear to him that his father was an enemy of God he disassociated himself from him.⁹⁵

Abu Huraira narrated: The Prophet said, “On the Day of Resurrection Ibrahim will meet his father Azar whose face will be dark and covered with dust.(The Prophet Ibrahim will say to him): ‘Didn’t I tell you not to disobey me?’ His father will reply: ‘Today I will not disobey you.’ Ibrahim will say: ‘O Lord! You promised me not to disgrace me on the Day of Resurrection; and what will be more disgraceful to me than cursing and dishonoring my father?’ Then Allah will say (to him): ‘I have forbidden Paradise for the disbelievers.’ Then he will be addressed, ‘O Ibrahim! Look! What is underneath your feet?’ He will look and there he will see a Dhabh (an animal,) blood-stained, which will be caught by the legs and thrown in the (Hell) Fire.”⁹⁶

Al Hafiz said the wisdom for his transformation was to deter Ibrahim so that his father would not remain in the fire in his familiar likeness and thereby be a source of shame or disgrace for Ibrahim.

It was also said that the wisdom of transforming him into a hyena is because it is considered one of the most foolish animals and Azar was among the most foolish of all mankind. That is because even after his son had illustrated to him all the evidence he still persisted in disbelief until

his death. Equally, because Ibrahim had gone to all extremes to show humility and respect for him and yet he persisted in disbelief. Hence he was treated in this most humiliating manner on the Day of Judgment.⁹⁷

BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL RESULTS:

Starting the propagation and call to faith with relatives.

Kindness and humility toward them especially the elderly and well positioned among them

To bear inconvenience from relatives which are not tolerated from others. That is because of their increased rights and concern for them. And hope that they would be saved from the situations they placed themselves in.

To meet cruelty with kindness. The guided caller to Islam must arm himself with this attribute so that he would not utter any words except those which are good and pleasant as Ibrahim said, 'Peace be upon You' and increased him in goodness, I will seek the forgiveness of my Sustainer for you.

Ibrahim the friend of Allah did not benefit his father on the Day of Judgment and he did not save him from the fire. It is binding upon every servant to sell his soul to Allah and do righteous deeds that would cause him to enter the paradise of Allah as Almighty says:

"THEN, WHEN THE TRUMPET [OF RESURRECTION] IS BLOWN, NO TIES OF KINSHIP WILL ON THAT DAY PREVAIL AMONG THEM, AND NEITHER WILL THEY ASK ABOUT ONE ANOTHER." (23:101)

IBRAHIM'S CALL TO HIS PEOPLE TO ABANDON THE WORSHIP OF IDOLS

There is no doubt that Ibrahim had some of the strongest arguments among the prophets.

Allah says;

"AND THIS WAS OUR ARGUMENT WHICH WE VOUCHSAFED UNTO IBRAHIM AGAINST HIS PEOPLE: [FOR] WE DO RAISE BY DEGREES WHOM WE WILL." (6:83)

He was also kindhearted as the Quran testifies:

"AND, BEHOLD, OF HIS PERSUASION WAS IBRAHIM, TOO, WHEN HE TURNED TO HIS SUSTAINER WITH A HEART FREE OF EVIL" (37:83-4)

Accordingly if the caller to Islam has good arguments and a sound heart Allah will cause many benefits to come from him.

"AND CONVEY UNTO THEM THE STORY OF IBRAHIM – [HOW IT WAS] WHEN HE ASKED HIS FATHER AND HIS PEOPLE, "WHAT IS IT THAT YOU WORSHIP?" THEY ANSWERED: "WE WORSHIP IDOLS, AND WE REMAIN EVER DEVOTED TO THEM." SAID HE: "DO [YOU REALLY THINK THAT] THEY HEAR WHEN YOU INVOKE THEM, OR BENEFIT YOU OR DO YOU HARM?" THEY EXCLAIMED: BUT WE FOUND OUR FOREFATHERS DOING THE SAME!" SAID [IBRAHIM]: "HAVE YOU, THEN, EVER CONSIDERED WHAT IT IS THAT YOU HAVE BEEN WORSHIPPING – YOU AND THOSE ANCIENT FORBEARS OF YOURS?"

"NOW [AS FOR ME, I KNOW THAT,] VERILY THESE [FALSE DEITIES] ARE MY ENEMIES, [AND THAT NONE IS MY HELPER] SAVE THE SUSTAINER OF ALL THE WORLDS, WHO HAS CREATED ME AND IS THE ONE WHO GUIDES, AND IS THE ONE WHO GIVES ME TO EAT AND TO DRINK, AND WHEN I FALL ILL, IS THE ONE WHO RESTORES ME TO HEALTH, AND WHO WILL CAUSE ME TO DIE AND THEN WILL BRING ME BACK TO LIFE – AND WHO, I HOPE, WILL FORGIVE ME MY FAULTS ON JUDGMENT DAY!" "O MY SUSTAINER! ENDOW ME WITH THE ABILITY TO JUDGE [BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG], AND MAKE ONE WITH THE RIGHTEOUS." (26:69-83)

According to Al Zamakshari Ibrahim knew that they were idol worshippers but he questioned them in order to make clear that what they were worshipping did not deserve veneration. When they responded with the usual answer of those who imitate their fathers he said to them; take this matter of your tradition to its furthest limit and in the end all that it amounts to is the worship of your forefathers. Surely the precedence of early generations is not proof of correctness. And, in the same manner, falsehood does not turn into truth with the passage of time. Thus, the worship of these idols is nothing save the worship of one's enemies. The meaning of this enmity is illustrated in the saying of Allah,

"BUT NAY! [ON JUDGMENT DAY] THESE [VERY OBJECTS OF ADORATION] WILL DISAVOW THE WORSHIP THAT WAS PAID TO THEM, AND WILL TURN AGAINST THOSE [WHO HAD WORSHIPPED THEM]!" (19:82)

Because the seducer to worship them is the worse enemy of man – Satan – Ibrahim said, “these [false deities] are my enemies.” Having thought hard about this matter Ibrahim concluded that the worship of idols was equivalent to worshipping one’s enemy, hence he avoided it and chose the worship of the One Who bestows all good. Ibrahim further conveyed to his people that this was his advice to himself first and that he built all the planning of his affairs upon this premise. With this in mind his people were forced to admit that what Ibrahim has advising them was nothing but that which he advised himself first. And besides, what he wanted for them is the same that the wanted for his own soul. This approach was, therefore, more likely to be accepted and more inspiring to his listener. For if he had declared that he was their enemy it would not have been as effective. But because he approached them through the door of indirect speech it conveyed to the counseled what direct speech did not. would not have conveyed the same as approval because he hopes in it. And perhaps because he placed such high hopes in his method that it led to acceptance.⁹⁸

BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL RESULTS

Blind following of others is one of the greatest problems that the callers to the way of Allah Almighty encounter. Al Zamakshari declared there is not a worse tradition than this and the sayings, which are accepted without evidence. Indeed, there is no deception worse than that of Satan to the imitators when he entices them to blindly follow their fathers in the worship of idols. They prostrate their foreheads before these false gods, believing that they are doing the right and seriously helping their faith. Hence they defend their falsehood before the people of truth. Surely it is shameful enough that the worship of idols should come from those who blindly follow traditions.

There is in Ibrahim’s saying ‘these [false deities] are my enemies’ an acquittal from the false gods and a declaration of war against them. Ibrahim went to great lengths to separate himself from polytheism and those who associate partners with God. He said;

“BUT I SHALL WITHDRAW FROM YOU ALL AND FROM WHATEVER YOU INVOKE INSTEAD OF GOD, AND SHALL INVOKE MY SUSTAINER [ALONE]: IT

MAY WELL BE THAT MY PRAYER [FOR THEE] WILL NOT REMAIN UNANSWERED BY MY SUSTAINER.” (19:48)

HIS DEBATE WITH HIS PEOPLE CONCERNING THE WORSHIP OF THE STARS

Allah says,

AND THUS WE GAVE IBRAHIM [HIS FIRST] INSIGHT INTO [GOD’S] MIGHTY DOMINION OVER THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH – AND [THIS] TO THE END THAT HE MIGHT BECOME ONE OF THOSE WHO ARE INWARDLY SURE.

THEN, WHEN THE NIGHT OVERSHADOWED HIM WITH DARKNESS, HE BEHELD A STAR; [AND] HE EXCLAIMED, “THIS IS MY SUSTAINER!” – BUT WHEN IT WENT DOWN, HE SAID, “I LOVE NOT THE THINGS THAT GO DOWN.”

THEN, WHEN HE BEHELD THE MOON RISING, HE SAID, “THIS IS MY SUSTAINER!” – BUT WHEN IT WENT DOWN, HE SAID, “INDEED, IF MY SUSTAINER – GUIDE ME NOT, I WILL MOST CERTAINLY BECOME ONE OF THE PEOPLE WHO GO ASTRAY!”

THEN, WHEN HE BEHELD THE SUN RISING, HE SAID, “THIS IS MY SUSTAINER! THIS ONE IS THE GREATEST [OF ALL]!” –

BUT WHEN IT [TOO]WENT DOWN, HE EXCLAIMED: “O MY PEOPLE! BEHOLD, FAR BE IT FROM ME TO ASCRIBE DIVINITY, AS YOU DO, TO AUGHT BESIDE GOD!

BEHOLD, UNTO HIM WHO BROUGHT INTO BEING THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH HAVE I TURNED MY FACE, HAVING TURNED AWAY FROM ALL THAT IS FALSE; AND I AM NOT OF THOSE WHO ASCRIBE DIVINITY TO AUGHT BESIDE HIM.” (6:75-9)

Ibn Kathir says this is the method of debating with his people and explanation to them that these visible celestial bodies should not be ascribed divinity or be worshipped together with Allah Almighty. That is because they are all creations that are governed, made, directed and subjected. They appear at times and disappear at other times becoming absent from this world. Yet, nothing becomes absent from the Lord, Most

FROM THE EPISODES OF FAITH

High and no secret can be concealed from Him. Instead He is the Everlasting, He is permanent without end and there is no God save Him.

It is clear from his admonition to the people of Haran about the stars that they used to worship them. That, of course, dispels the saying of those who claim that he said this when he emerged from an underground passage when he was a small boy. Ibn Ishaq and others mentioned this story. It is, however, based on Israelite fables, which cannot be relied upon not least because they contradict the truth.⁹⁹

BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL RESULTS

Ibrahim's statement to the star 'this is my Lord' was not in the form of doubt or polytheism. As Allah Almighty clears him of this when He said, "he was not of those who ascribed divinity to Allah." Al Shinqiti said all the past creations of all times established that he never for one day engaged in an act of polytheism.¹⁰⁰

HIS ARGUMENT WITH THE KING WHO CLAIMED DIVINITY

Allah says;

ART THOU NOT AWARE OF THAT [KING] WHO ARGUED WITH IBRAHIM ABOUT HIS SUSTAINER, [SIMPLY] BECAUSE GOD HAD GRANTED HIM KINGSHIP? LO! IBRAHIM SAID: "MY SUSTAINER IS HE WHO GRANTS LIFE AND DEALS DEATH."

[THE KING] REPLIED: "I [TOO] GRANT LIFE AND DEAL DEATH!" SAID IBRAHIM: "VERILY, GOD CAUSES THE SUN TO RISE IN THE EAST;

CAUSE IT, THEN, TO RISE IN THE WEST!" THEREUPON HE WHO WAS BENT ON DENYING THE TRUTH REMAINED DUMBFOUNDED: FOR GOD DOES NOT GUIDE PEOPLE WHO [DELIBERATELY] DO WRONG." (2:258)

Shaykh Muhammad Rashid Rida said; the query was in his saying; "Art thou not aware of that [king] who argued with Ibrahim about his Sustainer" pertains to the strangeness of the argument and the vanity of

its subject. The question further disputes the argument. And his statement, 'simply because Allah had granted him kingship.' The implication is that he was driven to make his claim because Allah had given him authority. This was the origin of his indulgence in self-conceit and the cause of his arrogance and pride in his power. 'Lo! Ibrahim said: my Sustainer is He who grants life and deal death.' As if he had asked him about his Lord to whose worship he was calling after he had broken the idols, which were being worshipped beside Allah and made foolish the dreams of those who worshipped them for the sake of his God. Hence Ibrahim gave this answer. The despotic king denied this claiming divinity to himself and said; "I [too] grant life and deal death." I grant pardon and allow to live whomsoever I had passed the death sentence and I cause to die whomsoever I wish by ordering their death. This response indicated that the king did not understand Ibrahim's statement.¹⁰¹

Ibn Kathir records when the argument with this king ended, many people who attended may not have been aware of the mention of other evidence between the existence of the maker and falsity claimed by Nimrod. "Said Ibrahim: "Verily, God causes the sun to rise in the east; cause it, then, to rise in the west!" That this subdued sun arises every day from the east as it is ordered by its Creator, mover and supreme power. He is Allah beside whom there is no God the Creator of everything. If you really give life as you claim and deal in death then bring the sun from the west. For the One who gives life and deals in death is the One who does whatever He wills. Nothing prevents Him or overpowers Him. On the contrary He prevails over everything and everything submits to Him. If you are what you claim then do this. If you don't, then you are not what you claim. And you and every one know that you cannot do this indeed you are incapable of creating a mosquito or overcome it.

Ibrahim exposed his misguidance, ignorance, and deceit in what he claimed and the incorrectness of his conduct. He, likewise, demonstrated how the king flaunted this conduct before his ignorant people yet he had no words to answer. "Thereupon he who was bent on denying the truth remained dumbfounded; for God does not guide people who [deliberately] do wrong."

BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL RESULTS

Among the benefits of calamity is that it dispels arrogance and self-conceit. If this king who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord was a poor and sick man devoid of hearing and seeing he would not have argued with Ibrahim about his Lord. Indeed he argued with Ibrahim about his Lord as Allah says, “[simply] because God had granted him kingship.”

It demonstrates the help of Allah for His friends and His inspiration of them with the strongest arguments to silence their enemies.

IBRAHIM SMASHES THE IDOLS AND IS THROWN INTO THE FIRE

Allah says:

“AND, INDEED, LONG BEFORE [THE TIME OF MUSA] WE VOUCHSAFED UNTO IBRAHIM HIS CONSCIOUSNESS OF WHAT IS RIGHT; AND WE WERE AWARE OF [WHAT MOVED] HIM WHEN HE SAID UNTO HIS FATHER AND HIS PEOPLE, “WHAT ARE THESE IMAGES TO WHICH YOU ARE SO INTENSELY DEVOTED?” THEY ANSWERED: WE FOUND OUR FOREFATHERS WORSHIPPING THEM.” SAID HE: “INDEED, YOU AND YOUR FOREFATHERS HAVE OBVIOUSLY GONE ASTRAY!” THEY ASKED: “HAST THOU COME UNTO US [WITH THIS CLAIM] IN ALL EARNEST — OR ART THOU ONE OF THOSE JESTERS?” HE ANSWERED: “NAY, BUT YOUR [TRUE] SUSTAINER IS THE SUSTAINER OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH — HE WHO HAS BROUGHT THEM INTO BEING: AND I AM ONE OF THOSE WHO BEAR WITNESS TO THIS [TRUTH]!” AND [HE ADDED TO HIMSELF,] “BY GOD, I SHALL MOST CERTAINLY BRING ABOUT THE DOWNFALL OF YOUR IDOLS AS SOON AS YOU HAVE TURNED YOUR BACKS AND GONE AWAY!” AND THEN HE BROKE THOSE [IDOLS] TO PIECES, [ALL] SAVE THE BIGGEST OF THEM, SO THAT THEY MIGHT [BE ABLE TO] TURN TO IT. [WHEN THEY SAW WHAT HAD HAPPENED,] THEY SAID: “WHO HAS DONE THIS TO OUR GODS? VERILY, ONE OF THE WORST WRONGDOERS IS HE!” SAID SOME [OF THEM]: “WE HEARD A YOUTH SPEAK OF THESE [GODS WITH SCORN]: HE IS CALLED IBRAHIM.” [THE OTHERS] SAID: THEN BRING HIM BEFORE THE PEOPLE’S EYES, SO THAT THEY MIGHT BEAR WITNESS ANGST HIM]!” [AND WHEN HE CAME,] THEY ASKED: “HAST THOU DONE THIS TO OUR GODS, O IBRAHIM?” HE ANSWERED: “NAY, IT WAS THIS ONE, THE BIGGEST OF THEM, THAT DID IT: BUT ASK THEM [YOURSSELVES] — PROVIDED THEY CAN SPEAK!” AND SO THEY TURN UPON ONE ANOTHER, SAYING, “BEHOLD, IT IS YOU WHO ARE DOING WRONG. BUT THEN THEY RELAPSED INTO THEIR FORMER WAY OF THINKING AND SAID: “THOU KNOWEST VERY WELL THAT THESE [IDOLS] CANNOT SPEAK!” SAID [IBRAHIM]: “DO YOU THEN WORSHIP, INSTEAD OF GOD SOMETHING THAT CANNOT BENEFIT YOU IN ANY WAY, NOR HARM YOU? FIE UPON YOU AND UPON ALL THAT YOU WORSHIP INSTEAD OF GOD! WILL YOU NOT, THEN, USE YOUR REASON?” THEY EXCLAIMED: “BURN HIM, AND [THEREBY] SUCCOUR YOUR GODS, IF YOU ARE GOING TO DO [ANYTHING]!” [BUT] WE SAID: “O FIRE! BE THOU COOL, AND [A SOURCE OF] INNER PEACE FOR IBRAHIM!” — AND WHEREAS THEY SOUGHT TO DO EVIL UNTO HIM, WE CAUSED THEM TO SUFFER THE GREATEST LOSS.” (21:51-70)

The people of faith have nothing that engages their hearts and limbs as the issue of monotheism. They strive always to ensure that the word of Allah is supreme, even if their methods and ways of reform differ. But all of them strive to make the word of Allah prevail and the word of those who disbelieve the lowest. They do not strive for worldly gain, status, power or the accumulation of wealth. For their hearts and limbs worship Allah, Most Gracious. They love that people would also worship Allah with their hearts and limbs. And that everyone should humble themselves before Allah and be governed by His law. This implies that all the idols, which are worshipped besides Allah should be broken and that men should be free from the blind subservience to others than Allah. As Rabi' ibn Amir said when he entered the presence of Rustum: "Verily He has raised us to lead the people out of the worship of slaves to the worship of Allah and from the narrowness of this world to its widest expanses and from the injustice of religion to the justice of Islam."

The enemies of Allah Almighty have various objectives. They want to preserve their status and power and ensure the subservience of the people to them. Likewise, they seek to preserve whatever worldly gain they accrue from their power and base desires. Here arises the conflict between truth and falsehood and the people of faith and those of excesses. In the appearance of the people of truth there is an awakening of others from their negligence. In their demand for the rule of Allah there is the demise of the power of the enemies of Allah and their authority over the people. "Whom they hate for no other reason than that they believe in God, the Almighty, the One to whom all praise is due." (85:8)

It is impossible for the people of truth and the people of falsehood to come together because what they both seek to achieve is the loss of the other. This is just one chapter in the series of this conflict and an encounter in the encounters of truth and falsehood and an issue from the issues of faith that increase the people of faith in faith and announce to the oppressors disappointment and loss. The gods of the disbelievers will be destroyed, their idols will be broken and they will be overcome with distress. Thus they threaten and said, "Who has done this to our gods? Verily, one of the worst wrongdoers is he." Ignorance was struck in its time and the gods that they used to call to beside Allah and from whom they hoped beside Allah were destroyed. The investigation of the people

and their reports indicated that the accused was a young man called Ibrahim. And the evidence of the case suggests that they heard him announce his enmity to everything that is worshipped beside Allah. He is the one who used to say:

"NOW [AS FOR ME, I KNOW THAT,] VERILY, THESE [FALSE DEITIES] ARE MY ENEMIES, [AND THAT NONE IS MY HELPER] SAVE THE SUSTAINER OF ALL THE WORLDS, AND IS THE ONE WHO GIVES ME TO EAT AND TO DRINK, AND WHEN I FALL ILL, IS THE ONE WHO RESTORES ME TO HEALTH, AND WHO WILL CAUSE ME TO DIE AND WILL BRING ME BACK TO LIFE — AND WHO, WILL FORGIVE ME MY FAULTS ON JUDGMENT DAY!" (26:77-82)

He is also the one who threatened and vowed: And [he added to himself,]

"BY GOD, I SHALL MOST CERTAINLY BRING ABOUT THE DOWNFALL OF YOUR IDOLS AS SOON AS YOU HAVE TURNED YOUR BACKS AND GONE AWAY." (21:57)

This is a case in which only one man was accused despite the crushing defeat he inflicted on the disbelievers. He is Ibrahim about whom Allah said:

"VERILY IBRAHIM WAS A MAN WHO COMBINED WITHIN HIMSELF ALL VIRTUES." (16:120)

And the command was given by the tyrants of that age to arrest Ibrahim and present him to the court and he committed no crime except the proclamation of monotheism. It was one thing to proclaim monotheism but on this occasion he did so with his hands and broke the gods of the people and struck the pagan idol a powerful blow in its forehead. The court was arbitrary, it did not judge by the law of Allah but rather judged by the law of the despots. It took orders from an autocratic king who transgressed, tyrannized and claimed lordship until his oppression and dictatorship caused him to say: "I give life and deal in death." The accusation was directed to Allah's prophet, Ibrahim, and despite the fairness of their minds they felt no sense of shame with this accusation.

"THEY SAID: HAST THOU DONE THIS TO OUR GODS, O IBRAHIM?" GLORY BE TO ALLAH! WHAT GOD IS THIS THAT CANNOT BENEFIT AND DEFEND ITSELF. IT IS INCAPABLE OF STANDING UP FOR ITSELF LET ALONE TO STAND

UP FOR OTHERS, BENEFIT OR HARM THEM.

And the accusation is presented to Ibrahim whom Allah Almighty praises:

“AND THIS WAS OUR ARGUMENT WHICH WE VOUCHSAFED UNTO IBRAHIM AGAINST HIS PEOPLE: [FOR] WE DO RAISE BY DEGREES WHOM WE WILL.” (6:83)

Even though the accusation was in itself false in the minds of the rational people, Ibrahim increased them in agitation and doubt concerning what they were involved in. “Nay, it was this one, the biggest of them, that did it: but ask them [yourselves] provided they can speak.” Ibrahim wanted them to acknowledge the shortcoming of these gods and recognition that they do not speak, benefit or harm: “And so they turned upon one another, saying, “Behold, it is you who are doing wrong.”

The people awoke from their drunken state and they became aware of their stupidity in the face of this reasoning that Ibrahim presented. Glory be to Allah! The word of truth shook their ranks and returned to themselves with rebuke and denial. If these gods do not speak, do not benefit, and do not harm then why do we worship them beside Allah.

Al Zamakshari noted when they were overwhelmed by the limitations and felt strangled by them they returned to themselves and said: you are the real oppressors not the one whom you have oppressed when you said: “who has done this to our gods? Verily, one of the worst wrongdoers is he!” 102

“BUT THEN THEY RELAPSED INTO THEIR FORMER WAY OF THINKING, AND SAID: “THOU KNOWEST VERY WELL THAT THESE [IDOLS] CANNOT SPEAK!” THEN THE MISFORTUNE OF THE PEOPLE OVERCAME THEM. THEY WERE OVERWHELMED WITH THE FERVOR FOR THE FALSEHOOD OF THEIR FALSE GODS. “THEY SAID:” THOU KNOWEST VERY WELL THAT THESE [IDOLS] CANNOT SPEAK!” AND THIS IS WHAT IBRAHIM THE FRIEND OF ALLAH WANTED THEM TO CONFESS WHEN HE SAID: “NAY, IT WAS THIS ONE, THE BIGGEST OF THEM, THAT DID IT: BUT ASK THEM [YOURSSELVES] PROVIDED THEY CAN SPEAK.” HERE, FOR A SECOND TIME THEY REALIZED THE LIMITATION AND HE PROVED TO THEM WITH CONVINCING PROOF. SAID IBRAHIM: “DO YOU THEN WORSHIP, INSTEAD OF GOD, SOMETHING THAT CANNOT BENEFIT YOU IN ANY WAY, NOR HARM YOU? FIE UPON YOU AND UPON ALL THAT YOU WORSHIP INSTEAD OF GOD! WILL YOU NOT, THEN, USE YOUR REASON?” SURELY THE GOD THAT IS WORSHIPPED MUST BE ABLE TO BRING GOOD UPON ITS WORSHIPPERS AND PREVENT HARM FROM

BEFALLING THEM. IF NOT, THEN IT IS A FALSE GOD THAT DOES NOT DESERVE TO BE WORSHIPPED. ALLAH ALMIGHTY SAYS: “AND IF GOD SHOULD TOUCH THEE WITH MISFORTUNE, THERE IS NONE WHO COULD REMOVE IT BUT HE; AND IF HE SHOULD TOUCH THEE WITH GOOD FORTUNE – IT IS HE WHO HAS THE POWER TO WILL ANYTHING.” (6:17)

“THEY EXCLAIMED: ‘BURN HIM, AND [THEREBY] SUCCOUR YOUR GODS, IF YOU ARE GONG TO DO [ANYTHING]!’

WHEN HE DEFEATED THEM WITH ARGUMENT AND REASON AND THEY WERE DEFEATED IN THIS AREA THEY TOOK REFUGE IN THE FIELD OF BRUTE FORCE AND REPRESSION. THIS IS THE AFFAIR OF EVERY LIAR WHEN HE IS CONFRONTED WITH THE POWER OF TRUTH, HE RESORTS TO FIGHTING WITH PHYSICAL FORCE AND CRUELTY.

AND SO THE COMMAND WAS GIVEN BY THE REPRESSIVE COURT FOR THE SEVEREST PUNISHMENT UPON IBRAHIM IN DEFENCE OF FALSEHOOD AND OUT OF ENVY OF HIM. “THOSE WHO HAVE ATTAINED TO FAITH LOVE GOD MORE THAN ALL ELSE.” (2:165)

THE VINDICTIVE VERDICT WAS DEATH BY BURNING

They then started to gather all kinds of wood from everywhere. They continued to do this for a while until if one of them fell ill he would vow that if he is cured he would carry wood to burn Ibrahim.103 Among some of the noblest sayings of Ibrahim during this trying time were those narrated by ibn Abbas. He said when Ibrahim was thrown into the fire he said; Allah is enough for us and he is the best overseer of my affairs. Many years later Prophet Muhammad said the same words when he was told;

“BEHOLD, A HOST HAS GATHERED AGAINST YOU; SO BEWARE OF THEM!” WHEREUPON THIS ONLY INCREASED THEIR FAITH, SO THAT THEY ANSWERED, GOD IS ENOUGH FOR US; AND HOW EXCELLENT A GUARDIAN IS HE!” – AND RETURNED [FROM THE BATTLE] WITH GOD’S BLESSINGS AND BOUNTY, WITHOUT HAVING BEEN TOUCHED BY EVIL.” (2:173-4)104

A sacrificed himself to Allah and displayed the best trust in Him and attuned his heart with his Lord. Allah Almighty says:

"IS NOT GOD ENOUGH FOR HIS SERVANT? AND YET, THEY WOULD FRIGHTEN THEE WITH THOSE [IMAGINARY DIVINE POWERS WHICH THEY WORSHIP] BESIDE HIM!" (39:36) HE ALSO SAYS: "AND FOR EVERYONE WHO PLACES HIS TRUST IN GOD, HE [ALONE] IS ENOUGH." (65:3)

Thus came the opening and salvation from this great calamity.

"WE SAID: "O FIRE! BE THOU COOL, AND [A SOURCE OF] INNER PEACE FOR IBRAHIM!"

Glory be to He who rescued this noble soul from Azar. Then he helped him with His support. Then He revealed to him the guidance and he was aided and strengthened. And when Allah saw that he had turned away from the creation and did not fuel himself except with submission, "We said: "O fire! Be thou cool, and [a source of] inner peace for Ibrahim!" As a servant who had sacrificed his soul for Allah, Ibrahim finally earned His support. And when he was thrown into the fire because of his love for Allah, He ordered it: "O fire ! Be thou cool."

He gave his wealth to the two guests, and submitted his son as a sacrifice to gain the closeness to Allah, and he submitted when he was thrown into the fire. And when Allah saw that he was sincere in his love "We said: O fire! Be thou cool, and [a source of] inner peace for Ibrahim!"

Allah tried Ibrahim with His commandments and he fulfilled them. Hence He showed him His power the day He ordered him to take four birds and

"TEACH THEM TO OBEY THEE" (2:260)

and he broke the idols because he was jealous of the love of the people they gained in lieu of Allah. And when the fire began to blaze its heat was extinguished and a tree from paradise was planted in place of the fire.

Ibn Kathir noted, they wanted to triumph but they were disappointed. They wanted to be exalted but they were debased. They wanted to be victorious but they were defeated. Allah Almighty said;

"AND WHEREAS THEY SOUGHT TO DO EVIL UNTO HIM, WE CAUSED THEM TO SUFFER THE GREATEST LOSS." (21:70)

In another verse Allah says,

"WE FRUSTRATED THEIR DESIGNS, AND THUS BROUGHT THEM LOW." (37:98)

Thus they achieved defeat and disgrace in this world. As for the hereafter, their fire would not be cool or a source of inner peace for them. No greetings or peace would be bestowed upon them. On the contrary as Allah Almighty says;

"VERILY, HOW EVIL AN ABODE AND A STATION." (25:66)

Al Bukhari transmitted a tradition on the authority of Umm Sharik that the Prophet ﷺ Narrated Um Sharik: Allah's Apostle ordered that the salamander should be killed and said, "It (i.e. the salamander) blew (the fire) on Ibrahim."105

LESSONS AND SPIRITUAL BENEFITS:

The people of truth are stronger than the people of falsehood even if the latter are larger in number and have more means at their disposal. That is because Allah is the helper of the people of truth. He is their guide, inspirer and source of support.

That whomsoever seeks refuge and protection beside Allah and places his trust fully in Him, Allah Almighty would not disappoint him and there is great virtue in their saying "God is enough for us; and how excellent a guardian is He."

The adaptation of the hearts of the people of falsehood to deceit and their intimacy with polytheism allows their hearts not to repel the ugly and disapprove the abominable. Despite their belief that their gods cannot speak, benefit nor harm them, they persist in serving them and avenge the one who destroyed them, even though he dispelled their reasoning and exposed the folly of their minds.

The caravan of faith is one. It is headed by the prophets and joined by love for Allah Almighty, invitation to monotheism, and loyalty to Allah, His Messenger and the believers. The enemies of Allah are also the enemies of His friends in every age and place. Hence the Prophet ﷺ ordered us to kill the salamander. He said it stoked the fire that was lit for Ibrahim. And this is what makes a believer feel close to all the believers before him and love all the angels of Allah and His messengers. That is because of the bond of faith and the love of the most Gracious. Likewise, they oppose the enemies of Allah and His prophets.

The people of falsehood are in doubt and confusion; "And so they turned upon one another, saying, "behold, it is you who are doing wrong. But then the relapsed into their former way of thinking and said:

"THOU KNOWEST VERY WELL THAT THESE [IDOLS] CANNOT SPEAK!"
(21:64-5)

And the people of truth who practiced faith cheerfully in their hearts are firmer than the mountains; that is because of the steadfastness that Allah has bestowed upon them.

"[T]HUS,] GOD GRANTS FIRMNESS UNTO THOSE WHO HAVE ATTAINED TO FAITH THROUGH THE WORD THAT IS UNSHAKABLY TRUE IN THE LIFE OF THIS WORLD AS WELL AS IN THE LIFE TO COME." (14:27)

And His saying also;

"LO! THY SUSTAINER INSPIRED THE ANGELS TO [CONVEY THIS HIS MESSAGE TO THE BELIEVERS]: "I AM WITH YOU!" [AND HE COMMANDED THE ANGELS:] "AND GIVE FIRMNESS UNTO THOSE WHO HAVE ATTAINED TO FAITH [WITH THESE WORDS FROM ME]:" (8:12)

Among the indications is that the causes may differ from their effects as depicted in Allah's saying; "O fire! Be thou cool, and [a source of] inner peace for Ibrahim!" The nature of burning in fire has one meaning from which no other meanings can be derived. Yet, the wood was burnt until it became ashes from the heat at the same time that it was cool for Ibrahim. This confirmed beyond any doubt that effect is a reality that is brought about by the will of the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He causes whatever causes He wills over what He wills. And that there is no effect of any of them except by His will, Glory be He.106

THE SACRIFICE OF ISMAIL

Allah Almighty narrates about Ibrahim;

And [Ibrahim] said:

"VERILY, I SHALL [LEAVE THIS LAND AND] GO WHEREVER MY SUSTAINER WILL GUIDE ME!"

[AND HE PRAYED:] "O MY SUSTAINER! BESTOW UPON ME THE GIFT OF [A SON WHO SHALL BE] ONE OF THE RIGHTEOUS!" – WHEREUPON WE GAVE HIM THE GLAD TIDING OF A BOY-CHILD GENTLE [LIKE HIMSELF]. AND [ONE DAY,] WHEN [THE CHILD] HAD BECOME OLD ENOUGH TO SHARE IN HIS FATHER'S ENDEAVOURS, THE LATTER SAID: "O DEAR SON! I HAVE SEEN IN A DREAM THAT I SHOULD SACRIFICE THEE: CONSIDER, THEN, WHAT WOULD BE THY VIEW?" [ISMAIL] ANSWERED: "O MY FATHER! DO AS THOU ART BIDDEN: THOU WILT FIND ME, IF GOD SO WILLS, AMONG THOSE WHO ARE PATIENT IN ADVERSITY!" BUT AS SOON AS THE TWO HAD SURRENDERED THEMSELVES TO [WHAT THEY THOUGHT TO BE] THE WILL OF GOD, AND [IBRAHIM] HAD LAID HIM DOWN ON HIS FACE, WE CALLED OUT TO HIM: O IBRAHIM, THOU HAST ALREADY FULFILLED [THE PURPOSE OF] THAT DREAM-VISION!" THUS, VERILY, DO WE REWARD THE DOERS OF GOOD: FOR, BEHOLD, ALL THIS WAS INDEED A TRIAL, CLEAR IN ITSELF. AND WE RANSOMED HIM WITH A TREMENDOUS SACRIFICE, AND LEFT HIM THUS TO BE REMEMBERED AMONG LATER GENERATIONS: PEACE BE UPON IBRAHIM!" THUS DO WE REWARD THE DOERS OF GOOD – FOR HE WAS TRULY ONE OF OUR BELIEVING SERVANTS. (37: 99-110)

He is Ibrahim, may Allah's peace be upon him, who came to his Lord with a pure heart.

He is Ibrahim who was thrown into the fire while he was still a mere boy and he emerged safe and triumphant from the fire because Allah Almighty made the fire cool and a source of comfort for him.

He is the same Ibrahim whom Allah had saved along with his family from the oppressive king. Allah warded off his trap from his family, thwarted it and made Hajar a servant for him.

He is Ibrahim who immigrated with Hajar with his heart attached to Allah Almighty.

"AND [IBRAHIM] SAID: "VERILY, I SHALL [LEAVE THIS LAND AND] GO WHEREVER MY SUSTAINER WILL GUIDE ME." (37:99)

He is Ibrahim who called upon his Lord and asked him to relieve his loneliness. He said;

"O MY SUSTAINER! BESTOW UPON ME THE GIFT OF [A SON WHO SHALL BE] ONE OF THE RIGHTEOUS!" WHEREUPON WE GAVE HIM THE GLAD TIDING OF A BOY-CHILD GENTLE [LIKE HIMSELF]." (37:100-01)

He is Ibrahim whom Allah chose to be a beloved friend.

"FOR ALLAH DID TAKE IBRAHIM FOR A FRIEND." (4:125)

He is Ibrahim who abandoned his infant son and mother in a desolate valley, with no one to sit and chat with them. A valley wherein there was no vegetation and stock farming. He did so in accord with the command of Allah and then turned to Him saying;

"O OUR SUSTAINER! BEHOLD, I HAVE SETTLED SOME OF MY OFFSPRING IN A VALLEY IN WHICH THERE IS NO ARABLE LAND, CLOSE TO THY SANCTIFIED TEMPLE..." (14:37)

Thus Allah created for them a relief and opening. He is Ibrahim who had advanced in age to become a venerable old man. And this patient boy became the best source of help for him, he shared in his endeavors offering his full hearing and seeing. The old man saw in a vision that he was ordered to sacrifice his only son and offspring. That boy who he was blessed with in his old age, at a time when he was most in need of him, the patient and gentle son. If he was not able to love him from the heart of a father with the emotions of parenthood he was able to love him because of his patience and nobility. But the commander is Allah who is never asked about what He does but they are asked; the Wise, the Knowing about His orders and His prohibitions and His decrees and power. The one who is commanded is Ibrahim, the beloved friend. Allah did not cause him loss in his youth so why should He cause him loss in his old age. Besides, he did not attain the close friendship of Allah except with obedience. Ibrahim is taking the initiative to carry out the command of Allah Almighty because His orders are not subject to the thought, perception and analysis of imperfect minds.

"WHENEVER GOD AND HIS APOSTLE HAVE DECIDED A MATTER, IT IS NOT FOR A BELIEVING MAN OR A BELIEVING WOMAN TO CLAIM FREEDOM OF CHOICE INSOFAR AS THEY THEMSELVES ARE CONCERNED: FOR HE WHO [THUS] REBELS AGAINST GOD AND HIS APOSTLE HAS ALREADY, MOST OBVIOUSLY, GONE ASTRAY." (33:37)

The execution of orders is very difficult for the human soul. A servant may struggle and sacrifice his soul for the sake of God and know that it is only a matter of moments. Then the soul may leave after this to its maker and enjoy the bliss of Allah Almighty's paradise. And the martyr does not taste the pain of death except as if he was pricked.

But, to take a knife and slaughter his only son who was his hearing and seeing and that his blood should flow on his hands and clothes. To Allah belong these souls that are tested with these trials.

"[BUT] GOD KNOWS BEST UPON WHOM TO BESTOW HIS MESSAGE." (6:124)

Did Ibrahim deserve to become a beloved friend with qualities that were commonly shared with all the believers? Ibrahim, who broke the idols, was thrown into the fire, left the infant boy and his mother in the valley wherein there was no vegetation. Allah did not forsake him for one moment. He did not cause him loss in the prime of his youth while on every occasion he gave preference to the will of Allah and exalted His command.

And what of that boy whom Allah had blessed him after he had advanced in age? He was an absolute blessing from Allah, Most Gracious. If it is strange that the affair of this old man who grew up in obedience of Allah, strengthened his love for Allah, and earned from Him the description of beloved friendship which is the highest form of love, then the matter of the patient boy is certainly even more astonishing.

Ibrahim disclosed to his son what he had seen in the vision so that it would have been easier for him and better to his heart rather than taking him by force and slaughtering him. "He said: "O my dear son! I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice thee: consider, then, what would be thy view" Did the patient boy say, what is my sin, have I done anything to deserve this? Did he say, are you prepared to slaughter me? Did he say, how would you live with yourself after you have slaughtered me? Did

he say, what would be your answer to my mother if you slaughter me with your own hands?

Tens of questions could have crossed the mind and emerge from the lips of the boy. But he was a patient boy as Allah described him. Instead his answer was the pinnacle of steadfastness and guidance. It helped his father to obey Allah and execute His command. Indeed it made his trial easy for him by showing that he was not afraid. And that he would be patient in this matter with the help of Allah. He was truthful to his promises as Allah Almighty says;

“AND CALL TO MIND, THROUGH THIS DIVINE WRIT, ISMAIL. BEHOLD, HE WAS ALWAYS TRUE TO HIS PROMISE.” (19:54)

Resignation and surrender to the command of Allah Almighty is what is required from His servants.

“BUT NAY, BY THY SUSTAINER! THEY DO NOT [REALLY] BELIEVE UNLESS THEY MAKE THEE [O PROPHET] A JUDGE OF ALL ON WHICH THEY DISAGREE AMONG THEMSELVES, AND THEN FIND IN THEIR HEARTS NO BAR TO AN ACCEPTANCE OF THY DECISION AND GIVE THEMSELVES UP [TO IT] IN UTTER SELF-SURRENDER.” (4:65)

It is binding upon the servants that they submit and humble themselves and believe that all good comes through obedience to Allah. And, that evil and calamity stems from rebellion against the commands of Allah Almighty. Ar Razi noted that the wisdom of consulting the son in this matter was to put him in the picture of this reality so that he would display his patience in the obedience of Allah and that he would become the apple of Ibrahim's eye when he sees that his son had reached this great level of compassion and patience with the most difficult trials. Thus the son would achieve the splendid rewards of the hereafter and good commendation.

And his saying, “thou will find me, if God so wills, among those who are patient in adversity”, meaning with the sacrifice or the command of Allah.¹⁰⁷

The episode takes another step beyond words and discussion toward execution “But as soon as the two had surrendered themselves to [what they thought to be] the will of God, and [Ibrahim] had laid him down on his face,” Al Qasimi said they surrendered and complied with His

command without delay and Ibrahim took out the knife and placed him with his forehead on the ground. This, according to ibn Kathir on the authority of ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Sa'eed ibn Jubayr, Qatadah and Dahak suggested that he wanted to slaughter him from the back of his neck so that he would not see his face at the time of the sacrifice.

In fact it was said that he laid him down as would be the case with an animal and a part of his forehead remained touching the ground, and they “surrendered”, meaning that Ibrahim said in the name of Allah, God is the greatest, and offered the boy to death.

“AND WE CALLED OUT TO HIM: O IBRAHIM, THOU HAST ALREADY FULFILLED [THE PURPOSE OF] THAT DREAM-VISION!” THUS, VERILY, DO WE REWARD THE DOERS OF GOOD.”

At this point, ibn Kathir noted, Allah called out “O Ibrahim thou has fulfilled the dream-vision. Meaning the purpose of your test, your obedience and response to the command of your Lord has been realized. And with this the submission of your son as a sacrifice as you allowed with your body in the fire as well as your wealth to the two guests. For this reason Allah said, ‘For, behold, all this was indeed a trial, clear in itself.’ In short – a test. “And We ransomed him with a tremendous sacrifice.” And Allah made the sacrifice of his son easy for him with a replacement for him. It is well known among the scholars that it was a white ram with horns.¹⁰⁸

What occurred expressed the condition, which cannot be fully described in terms of their joy and delight and their praise to Allah and thanks to Him for what he had given them by acquitting them from the great trial after it had continued for some time. They were thankful for what they gained in abundance by His enrichment of their souls with blessings, compensation, and the pleasure of Allah after which there is no other request. “Thus, verily, do we reward the doers of good.” An explanation for the relief He bestowed upon them after difficulty and success after hardship and anguish.¹⁰⁹

SPIRITUAL AND FRUITS AND BENEFITS

According to al Qasimi the commentators had identified in the various accounts of this story narrations that were objectionable and which had

no creditable chain of narrators or texts. In fact they were worthless. They all ended with al Suday and Ka'ab as their sources. Al Suday was well known for the weakness of his narrations and so too was Ka'ab.¹¹⁰

Ibn Kathir recorded when Ka'ab al Ahbar embraced Islam during the period of Umar he began to speak to Umar about his old books. It maybe that Umar listened to him and allowed the people to listen to what he had to say, fruitful and fruitless. And, this community is not in need of one letter from him. Al Qasimi believed ibn Kathir was right in this matter. That there is no need to add to the original story narrated in the Quran except if its narrators are confirmed as authentic and the heart is comfortable with it.¹¹¹

SCHOLARS DIFFER ABOUT THE ONE WHO WAS SACRIFICED, WAS HE ISMAEL OR ISSAC?

Ibn al Qayim mentioned that according to the true sayings of the scholars among the sahaba, and the generations that followed them immediately, Ismail was the one sacrificed. As for the sayings that it was Issac, it was proven wrong from more than twenty points of view. Ibn al Qayim said he heard Shaykh of Islam ibn Taymiya say, this statement is either received from the People of the Book even though it is false in their book because in it Allah ordered Ibrahim to sacrifice his son (his eldest) and in the text (his only son) and the People of the Book have no dispute with the Muslims that Ismail was his eldest son.

What deceived the supporters of this view is the mention in their Taurat to (sacrifice your son Issac). This is another example of their deviance and lies because it contradicts His statement (your eldest child) (and only). But the Jews envied the sons of Ismail of this honor and preferred that it were granted to them. And, that they should have been chosen instead of the Arabs. But Allah refused so that the honor should be given only to those deserving of it. How can they venture to say that the one to be sacrificed was Issac when Allah had given news about him and his son, Jacob, to his mother? He said about the angels that they said to the Ibrahim when they came to him with the good news;

“FEAR NOT! BEHOLD, WE ARE SENT TO THE PEOPLE OF LOT.” AND HIS WIFE, STANDING [NEARBY], LAUGHED [WITH HAPPINESS]; WHEREUPON WE

GAVE HER GLAD TIDINGS OF [THE BIRTH OF] ISSAC AND, AFTER ISSAC, OF [HIS SON] JACOB.” (11:70-1)

Thus, it was surely far-fetched that He would have given her news that she would have a son and then order that he should be sacrificed. And there is no doubt that Jacob was the one envisaged by the good news for it mentioned Issac and Jacob at the same time.¹¹²

Al Shinqiti observed that this story of the sacrifice supports one of the two famous views among the scholars of fundamentals concerning the wisdom of Allah's commandment. Was it for implementation only, or was it between implementation and trial? Because it was clear in these gracious verses that the wisdom of His entrusting Ibrahim with the sacrifice of his son was not in his execution of the act because he did not want him to sacrifice him in reality; instead the wisdom of charging him with this task was only a trial and test, will he stand firm in carrying it out or not, as Allah Almighty disclosed, “Behold, all this was indeed a trial, clear in itself. And We ransomed him with a tremendous sacrifice.” This shows that the wisdom of the order centered on submission and trial.¹¹³

As for As Suyuti, he stated in “al Iklil” that these verses; confirm that the dreams of the prophets are revelation, the permissibility of abandoning an act before it is done, and forwarding the Will of Allah in every matter. Some scholars have deduced from this story that whoever solemnly pledged to sacrifice his son should sacrifice a ram. Al Suyuti further noted that the tremendous sacrifice was interpreted in the hadiths and traditions as a ram. Hence the Maliki jurists deduced that the sacrifice of a sheep during the celebration of the sacrifice (Eid al Adha) is better than the sacrifice of a camel.

According to Sayid Qutb Allah does not want from His servant except submission and surrender. To the degree that there would not remain in the heart anything that would conceal it from Allah, detract it from His command or engage it with any other beside Allah. Even if he is the son from his own flesh and blood and even if it is own person and life. Ibrahim had done so. He applied himself diligently with everything including the most cherished thing. He applied himself along with his son with pleasure, contentment, calmness and conviction. There did not remain anything except flesh and blood. And Allah ransomed that soul that surrendered and complied. He ransomed it with a tremendous sacrifice.

fice. Some sources point out that it was a ram, which Ibrahim found ready by the act of Allah and His will so that he would sacrifice it instead of Ismail. And so this tradition of slaughter is upheld during the Eid of Adha [Festival of Sacrifice] in remembrance of this great event, which focused the spotlight on the reality of faith, the beauty of obedience and greatness of submission to which the Muslim community returns to know the truth of its father, Ibrahim, whom they follow. They are the inheritors his progeny and creed. Through it they come to know the nature of the faith with which it stands or upon which it stands. They come to know that it requires submission to the will of Allah, in contented and confident obedience, answering to the commands their Lord without asking why? This community does not hesitate to fulfill His will at the first sign or directive from Him. It does not keep anything for itself in itself. And it does not choose what any agency or fraternity presents to its Lord except if it is presented in the manner that He ordered it to be presented.¹¹⁴

Allah Almighty says;

“AND WHO COULD BE OF BETTER FAITH THAN HE WHO SURRENDERS HIS WHOLE BEING UNTO GOD AND IS A DOER OF GOOD, AND FOLLOWS THE CREED OF IBRAHIM, WHO TURNED AWAY FROM ALL THAT WAS FALSE – SEEING THAT GOD EXALTED IBRAHIM WITH HIS LOVE? (4:125)

Thus the surrender of ones countenance to Allah and the dedication of sincere intent for Him are signs of the faith of Ibrahim, which is the best way. Indeed Allah ordered His Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to follow the creed of Ibrahim. “And We inspired thee, [O Muhammad, with this message:] “Follow the creed of Ibrahim, who turned away from all that is false, and was not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God.” (16:123)

Allah, the Exalted, does not benefit in any way from the obedience of His servants and is not harmed by their disobedience. This is confirmed in a sacred hadith,

“O MY SERVANTS YOU WILL NOT ATTAIN HARMING ME SO AS TO HARM ME, AND YOU WILL NOT ATTAIN BENEFITING ME SO AS TO BENEFIT ME.”¹¹⁵ SURELY ALLAH ALMIGHTY GAINS NOTHING FROM THE SACRIFICE OF AN ELDER OF HIS SON, LIKEWISE HE DOES NOT BENEFIT FROM THE MEAT AND SACRIFICIAL ANIMALS. HE SAYS, “BUT BEAR IN MIND, NEVER DOES

“THEIR FLESH REACH GOD, AND NEITHER THEIR BLOOD; IT IS ONLY YOUR GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS THAT REACHES HIM.” (22:37)

Allah’s wish from His servants and requirement is God-consciousness in their hearts and the surrender of their limbs to Him. There was Ibrahim submitting to the command of Allah that he should slaughter his son. Ismail surrendered himself to be sacrificed and Allah ransomed him with a great ransom.

Concerning the benefits from the story of Ibrahim, Shaykh Abdur Rahman ibn Nasir al Sa’adi wrote, among them is that whoever has resolved to be obedient and takes all the measures within his power to do so, and then something prevents him from fulfilling this, his reward will be incumbent upon Allah. Allah has, indeed, said this about he who migrates and dies before he reaches his destination. Likewise, Allah mentions in the story of the sacrifice that He completed the reward for Ibrahim and Ismail when they submitted to Him and complied with His command. Then he removed from them the difficulty and decreed for them the reward.¹¹⁶

THE STORY OF MUSA الْمُسَعِّدُ

MUSA' VIRTUES

Allah Almighty commanded him in the Quran saying,

“AND CALL TO MIND, THROUGH THIS DIVINE WRIT, MUSA, BEHOLD, HE WAS A CHOSEN ONE, AND WAS AN APOSTLE [OF GOD], A PROPHET. AND [REMEMBER HOW] WE CALLED UPON HIM FROM THE RIGHT-HAND SLOPE OF MOUNT SINAI AND DREW HIM NEAR [UNTO US] IN MYSTIC COMMUNION, AND [HOW], OUT OF OUR GRACE, WE GRANTED UNTO HIM HIS BROTHER AAARON, TO BE A PROPHET [BY HIS SIDE]. (19:51-3)

Ibn Kathir recalled that some scholars interpreted this to mean that he was chosen in the same sense as when Allah said to Musa,

“I HAVE CHOSEN THEE ABOVE (OTHER) MEN”. (7:144) “AND CALL TO MIND, THROUGH THIS DIVINE WRIT, MUSA, BEHOLD, HE WAS A CHOSEN ONE, AND WAS AN APOSTLE [OF GOD], A PROPHET.” (19:51)

Allah combined for him two descriptions for he was among the great messengers, the five apostles of great resolve; they were Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Eesa, and Muhammad, may Allah's peace be upon them all.¹¹⁷

Concerning Allah's saying, “And [remember how] We called upon him from the right-hand slope of Mount Sinai”, Al Alousi stated that al Tur is a mountain between Egypt and Madyan (north-east of the Sinai peninsula). The ‘right’ is a description of the side of the mountain as Allah says elsewhere in the Quran,

“WE MADE A COVENANT WITH YOU ON THE RIGHT-HAND SLOPE OF MOUNT SINAI.” (20:80)

“And we drew him near unto us.” Meaning he was granted closeness and honor. His condition is like the one who is drawn close by the king to be confided with. He was chosen for companionship with the removal of the intermediaries who acted between them. In other words the king drew him closer after he became a confidante.¹¹⁸

On Allah's saying,

“AND [HOW], OUT OF OUR GRACE, WE GRANTED UNTO HIM HIS BROTH-

ER AAARON, TO BE A PROPHET [BY HIS SIDE].” (19:53)

Ibn Kathir wrote and we answered his request and his mediation in his brother and we made him a prophet as he said in another verse,

“AND MY BROTHER AARON – HE IS FAR BETTER IN SPEECH THAN I AM. SEND HIM, THEREFORE, AS A HELPER, SO THAT HE MIGHT [MORE ELOQUENTLY] BEAR WITNESS TO MY SPEAKING THE TRUTH: FOR I FEAR INDEED THAT THEY WILL GIVE ME THE LIE.” (28:34)

For this reason some early scholars mentioned that no one ever interceded with a greater intercession for another in this world than the intercession of Musa for Aaron to be a prophet.¹¹⁹

Allah says

“O MUSA! BEHOLD, I HAVE RAISED THEE ABOVE ALL PEOPLE BY VIRTUE OF THE MESSAGES WHICH I HAVE ENTRUSTED TO THEE, AND BY VIRTUE OF MY SPEAKING [UNTO THE]: HOLD FAST, THEREFORE, UNTO WHAT I HAVE VOUCHSAFED THEE, AND BE AMONG THE GRATEFUL!” (7:144)

Al Qurtubi notes that the Arabic words al istifa (the choice): al ijtiba signifies that Allah graced him, He does not, however, say above the creation because this favor was manifested in Allah speaking directly to Musa. He had also spoken to the angels, made him an apostle as he had done with others. The meaning of “above other men” is to whom revelation was sent.¹²⁰

Allah says;

“O YOU WHO HAVE ATTAINED TO FAITH! BE NOT LIKE THOSE [CHILDREN OF ISRAEL] WHO GAVE OFFENCE TO MUSA, AND [REMEMBER THAT] GOD SHOWED HIM TO BE INNOCENT OF WHATEVER THEY ALLEGED [AGAINST HIM OR DEMANDED OF HIM]; FOR OF GREAT HONOR WAS HE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.” (33:69)

Abu Hurayrah narrated: “Allah's Apostle said, ”(The Prophet) Musa was a shy person and used to cover his body completely because of his extensive shyness. One of the children of Israel hurt him by saying, 'He covers his body in this way only because of some defect in his skin, either leprosy or scrotal hernia, or he has some other defect.' Allah wished to clear Musa of what they said about him, so one day while Musa was in seclusion, he took off his clothes and put them on a stone and started

taking a bath. When he had finished the bath, he moved towards his clothes so as to take them, but the stone took his clothes and fled; Musa picked up his stick and ran after the stone saying, 'O stone! Give me my garment!' Till he reached a group of Bani Israel who saw him naked then, and found him the best of what Allah had created, and Allah cleared him of what they had accused him of. The stone stopped there and Musa took and put his garment on and started hitting the stone with his stick. By Allah, the stone still has some traces of the hitting, three, four or five marks. This was what Allah refers to in His Saying:

"O YOU WHO BELIEVE! BE YOU NOT LIKE THOSE WHO ANNOYED MUSA,
BUT ALLAH PROVED HIS INNOCENCE OF THAT WHICH THEY ALLEGED,
AND HE WAS HONORABLE IN ALLAH'S SIGHT." (33:69) 121

Ibn al Jawzi explained when Musa was alone and came out of the water and did not find his clothes he followed the stone on the basis that no one would believe that he was naked. It is agreed that there were a group of people whom he passed; and that the banks of the rivers even though they were usually empty there was no guarantee that there were no people nearby. He did this, therefore, on the grounds that no one would see him because of the secluded nature of the place.

According to Al Hafiz it is clear is that he continued to follow the stone as in the narration until it stopped at a gathering of Bani Israel among whom there were those who slandered him, and with this arises the benefit. For without this it would not have stopped at a place where there was any group of them.

This episode confirms that the prophets were exceptionally perfect in their features and characters. Thus whoever ascribes to any of the prophets a defect in his body has harmed him and it is feared by so doing would have disbelieved. In it also is a clear miracle of Musa. It also demonstrates the patience of the prophets with the ignorant and how they bore their insults. And Allah granted them the final say over those who persecuted them. 122

Al Nawawi and al Qadi and others mentioned that the prophets may Allah grant peace to them were all free of any physical or moral defects, they were free of deformations or blemishes or the trivialities that have been mentioned without confirmation by historians by adding some

defects to others. Allah delivered them from every defect and from every thing that the eyes abhor or turn the hearts away. 123

Among his virtues is that Allah Almighty spoke to him without an intermediary and caused him to hear His word as he said,

"AND GOD SPOKE HIS WORD UNTO MUSA" (4:164)

"AND WHEN MUSA CAME [TO MOUNT SINAI] AT THE TIME SET BY US,
AND HIS SUSTAINER SPOKE UNTO HIM" (7:143)

"HENCE, [REMEMBER HOW IT WAS] WHEN THY SUSTAINER SUMMONED
MUSA: "GO UNTO THOSE EVILDOING PEOPLE, THE PEOPLE OF PHARAOH,
WHO REFUSE TO BE CONSCIOUS OF ME." (26:10-11)

And in the two authentic collections of Bukhari and Muslim concerning the complaint of Adam and Musa to their Lord and Adam's saying to Musa, "You Musa, Allah chose you with His message and with His words." 124

AMONG HIS VIRTUES ALSO IS THAT ALLAH ALMIGHTY WROTE FOR HIM THE TAURAT WITH HIS HAND AS HE CONFIRMED, "AND WE ORDAINED FOR HIM IN THE TABLETS [OF THE LAW] ALL MANNER OF ADMONITION, CLEARLY SPELLING OUT EVERYTHING. AND [WE SAID;] "HOLD FAST UNTO THEM WITH [ALL THY] STRENGTH, AND BID THY PEOPLE TO HOLD FAST TO THEIR MOST GOODLY RULES." (7:145)

In the hadith about the complaint by Adam and Musa to their Lord, Adam said, "You Musa, Allah chose you with His message and His words and wrote for you the Taurat with His hands." 125

Among his virtues is what Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Don't give superiority to any prophet amongst Allah's Prophets, for when the trumpet will be blown, everyone on the earth and in the heavens will become unconscious except those whom Allah will exempt. The trumpet will be blown for the second time and I will be the first to be resurrected to see Musa holding Allah's Throne. I will not know whether the unconsciousness which Musa received on the Day of Tur has been sufficient for him, or has he got up before me. And I do not say that there is anybody who is better than Yunus bin Matta." 126 In another narration it is said "then Musa will take something from the throne with force."

Al Hafiz pointed observed that it is doubtful whether all the creation will swoon given that the dead have no feelings. Thus it was said, the intent is that those who swoon are the living. As for the dead they are exempted in Allah's saying, "except those whom Allah wills." That is to say those who previously died before this they will not swoon. Al Qurtubi supported this view and he was not opposed by what was transmitted in this hadith, that Musa was among those whom Allah had exempted because the prophets are alive with Him even in the form of the dead in the view of the people of the world. This had been confirmed with regard to the martyrs and there is no doubt that the prophets are at a higher station than the martyrs and the saying that the martyrs are among those who are exempted is accepted.¹²⁷

Among his virtues were the greatness of his law and the largeness of his following:

Ibn Kathir explained, Musa' law was, in a word, a great law and his followers were many. They included prophets, scholars, devoted worshippers, people who had no deep attachment to the world, princes, esteemed and prominent. But, they showed hostility and were substituted as they had substituted their law. They were transformed into monkeys and pigs. Then their law was abrogated after a full account was taken of their community. Many circumstances that are too long to mention befall them.

Among the evidence of the greatness of his law was the saying of Allah,

"AND ONCE AGAIN; WE VOUCHSAFED THE DIVINE WRIT UNTO MUSA IN FULFILLMENT [OF OUR FAVOR] UPON THOSE WHO PERSEVERED IN DOING GOOD, CLEARLY SPELLING OUT EVERYTHING, AND [THUS PROVIDING] GUIDANCE AND GRACE, SO THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE FAITH IN THE [FINAL] MEETING WITH THEIR SUSTAINER." (6:154)

And Allah's saying,

"AND, INDEED, WE VOUCHSAFED UNTO MUSA AND AARON [OUR REVELATION AS] THE STANDARD BY WHICH TO DISCERN THE TRUE FROM THE FALSE, AND AS A [GUIDING] LIGHT AND A REMINDER FOR THE GOD-CONSCIOUS." (21:48)

Still concerning the greatness of his community and its massive size

after that of our Prophet ﷺ Ibn 'Abbas narrated;

The Prophet once came out to us and said, "Some nations were displayed before me. A prophet would pass in front of me with one man, and another with two men, and another with a group of people. and another with nobody with him. Then I saw a great crowd covering the horizon and I wished that they were my followers, but it was said to me, 'This is Musa and his followers.' Then it was said to me, 'Look' I looked and saw a big gathering with a large number of people covering the horizon. It was said, "Look this way and that way." So I saw a big crowd covering the horizon. Then it was said to me, "These are your followers, and among them there are 70,000 who will enter Paradise without (being asked about their) accounts." Then the people dispersed and the Prophet did not tell who those 70,000 were. So the companions of the Prophet started talking about that and some of them said, "As regards us, we were born in the era of heathenism, but then we believed in Allah and His Apostle. We think however, that these (70,000) are our offspring." That talk reached the Prophet who said, "These (70,000) are the people who do not draw an evil omen from (birds) and do not get treated by branding themselves and do not treat with Ruqya, but put their trust (only) in their Lord." Then 'Ukasha bin Muhsin got up and said, "O Allah's Apostle! Am I one of those (70,000)?" The Prophet said, "Yes." Then another person got up and said, "Am I one of them?" The Prophet said, " 'Ukasha has anticipated you."¹²⁸

Among the virtues of Musa also is that which was reported in the hadiths concerning Prophet Muhammad's night journey when he passed by Musa and he saw him standing in prayer in his grave.¹²⁹ They also include what Imam Muslim transmitted on the authority of Anas concerning the Night Journey. It read, "Then I was taken to the sixth heaven. Gabriel (peace be upon him) asked for the door to be opened. It was said: Who is he? He replied: Gabriel. It was said: Who is with thee? He replied: Muhammad. It was said: Has he been sent for? He replied: He has indeed been sent for. (The gate) was opened for us and there I was with Musa (Musa peace be upon him) He welcomed me and prayed for my well-being."

This hadith also narrates, "Then Allah revealed to me a revelation and

He made obligatory for me fifty prayers every day and night. Then I went down to Musa (peace be upon him) and he said: What has your Lord enjoined upon your Ummah? I said: Fifty prayers. He said: Return to thy Lord and beg for reduction (in the number of prayers), for your community shall not be able to bear this burden, as I have put to test the children of Isra'il and tried them (and found them too weak to bear such a heavy burden). He (the Holy Prophet) said: I went back to my Lord and said: My Lord, make things lighter for my Ummah. (The Lord) reduced five prayers for me. I went down to Musa and said. (The Lord) reduced five (prayers) for me, He said: Verily thy Ummah shall not be able to bear this burden; return to thy Lord and ask Him to make things lighter. I then kept going back and forth between my Lord Blessed and Exalted and Musa, till He said: There are five prayers every day and night. O Muhammad, each being credited as ten, so that makes fifty prayers. He who intends to do a good deed and does not do it will have a good deed recorded for him; and if he does it, it will be recorded for him as ten; whereas he who intends to do an evil deed and does not do, it will not be recorded for him; and if he does it, only one evil deed will be recorded. I then came down and when I came to Musa and informed him, he said: Go back to thy Lord and ask Him to make things lighter. Upon this the Messenger of Allah remarked: I returned to my Lord until I felt ashamed before Him.”¹³⁰

This episode demonstrates Musa' concern for Muhammad ﷺ and his community and his advice to our Prophet and all the other prophets.

Among his virtues were his journeys to acquire knowledge in spite of his high station and ability. It demonstrates also the nobility of knowledge, the ethics of seeking it and the effort to gain it.

Ibn Abbas reported that he and al Hurr ibn Qays al Fazari once argued about Musa' companion. Ibn Abbas said he was Khidr. Then Ubayy ibn Ka'ab passed by them and ibn Abbas called him and said, 'me and my companion have differed about Musa' companion who asked about the way to meet him. Did you ever hear the Messenger of Allah mention anything concerning him?' 'Yes', he replied, 'I heard Allah's Messenger say while Musa was in a gathering of the Children of Israel a man came and said, 'Do you know anyone more knowledgeable than yourself?' He

[Musa] said, 'no.' Then Allah revealed to Musa yes, my servant Khidr is more learned than you). So Musa asked about the way to meet him. Then the fish was made a sign for him and it was said to him, 'if you lose the fish return and you would meet him. So he followed the fish in the sea. Musa' servant said to him, 'would you believe? When we betook the rock for a rest, behold, I forgot about the fish – and none but Satan made me forget it.' Musa said, 'That [was the place] which we were seeking. And the two turned back, retracing their footsteps and they found Khidr. It is about the two that Allah narrated in His book.¹³¹ He commanded Musa' humility even though there was no doubt that he was better than Khidr as he was from among the prophets of great resolve.

Among the things that indicate his virtue is that which was narrated by Abu Hurayrah concerning his death. He said, the angel of death was sent to Musa and when he came to him Musa slapped him on the eye. The angel returned to his Lord and said, 'you have sent me to a servant who does not want to die.' He said to him, 'Go back and tell him to place his hands on the back of an ox and for every hair that will come under it, he will be granted one year of life.' Musa said, 'O Lord!' 'What will happen after that?' Allah replied, 'Then death. Musa said, 'Let it come now.' Musa then requested Allah to let him die close to the Sacred Land so much so that he would be at a distance of a stones throw from it.' Abu Hurayrah added, 'Allah's apostle said, 'If I were there, I would show you his grave below the red sand hill on the side of the road.'¹³²

In the narration of Ammar, which conforms his virtue he said, "O Lord! Your servant Musa slapped my eye and had it not been for his status with you I would have cleft him asunder." Ibn Khazima said, some of the innovators denied this hadith and said if Musa knew him he would have been lenient with him and if he did not know him how is it he did not retaliate for slapping his eye?

The answer is Allah did not send the angel of death to Musa on that occasion to take his life. He rather sent him to test him. And Musa struck him because he saw a person enter his home without permission and did not know that he was the angel of death. Islamic – shari'ah – law approves the slapping of the eye of someone who looks into the home of a Muslim without his permission. The angels came to Ibrahim and Lot in

the form of men and they did not recognize them. If Ibrahim knew them he would not have offered them food and if Lot knew them he would not have feared that his people would abuse them. Notwithstanding this opinion that they knew him, from where have they brought this innovation on the legitimacy of reprisal between the angels and human beings? And besides, from where have they acquired the knowledge that the angel of death demanded revenge against Musa and it was not granted?

Al Nawawi noted there was no reason why Allah could not have allowed Musa to smack, as a test to the one who was struck. Other scholars said that he struck him because he came to take his spirit without informing him even though it was established that the angel never took the spirit of a prophet before giving him a choice. Hence when he gave him the choice on the second occasion he submitted.¹³³

THE STORY OF MUSA' BIRTH

Allah describes the events;

TA. SIN. MIM.

THESE ARE MESSAGES OF A DIVINE WRIT CLEAR IN ITSELF AND CLEARLY SHOWING THE TRUTH.

WE [NOW] CONVEY UNTO THEE SOME OF THE STORY OF MUSA AND PHARAOH, SETTING FORTH THE TRUTH FOR [THE BENEFIT OF] PEOPLE WHO WILL BELIEVE.

BEHOLD, PHARAOH, EXALTED HIMSELF IN THE LAND AND DIVIDED ITS PEOPLE INTO CASTES. ONE GROUP OF THEM HE DEEMED UTTERLY LOW; HE WOULD SLAUGHTER THEIR SONS AND SPARE [ONLY] THEIR WOMEN; FOR, BEHOLD, HE WAS ONE OF THOSE WHO SPREAD CORRUPTION [ON EARTH].

BUT IT WAS OUR WILL TO BESTOW OUR FAVOR UPON THOSE [VERY PEOPLE] WHO WERE DEEMED [SO] UTTERLY LOW, IN THE LAND, AND TO MAKE THEM FORERUNNERS IN FAITH, AND TO MAKE THEM HEIRS [TO PHARAOH'S GLORY], AND TO ESTABLISH THEM SECURELY ON EARTH, AND TO LET PHARAOH AND HAMAN AND THEIR HOSTS EXPERIENCE THROUGH THOSE [CHILDREN OF ISRAEL] THE VERY THING AGAINST WHICH THEY SOUGHT TO PROTECT THEMSELVES.

AND SO, [WHEN HE WAS BORN,] WE INSPIRED [THUS] THE MOTHER OF MUSA: "SUCCLE HIM [FOR A TIME], AND THEN, WHEN THOU HAST CAUSE TO FEAR FOR HIM, CAST HIM INTO THE RIVER, AND HAVE NO FEAR AND DO NOT Grieve — FOR WE SHALL RESTORE HIM TO THEE, AND SHALL MAKE HIM ONE OF OUR MESSAGE-BEARERS!"

AND [SOME OF] PHARAOH'S HOUSEHOLD FOUND [AND SPARED] HIM; FOR [WE HAD WILLED] THAT HE BECOME AN ENEMY UNTO THEM AND [A SOURCE OF] GRIEF, SEEING THAT PHARAOH AND HAMAN AND THEIR HOSTS WERE SINNERS INDEED!

NOW THE WIFE OF [PHARAOH SAID]: "A JOY TO THE EYE [COULD THIS CHILD BE] FOR ME AND THEE! SLAY HIM NOT: HE MAY WELL BE OF USE TO US, OR WE MAY ADOPT HIM AS A SON!" AND THEY HAD NO PRESENTIMENT [OF WHAT HE WAS TO BECOME].

ON THE MORROW, HOWEVER, AN ACHING VOID GREW UP IN THE HEART OF THE MOTHER OF MUSA, AND SHE WOULD INDEED HAVE DISCLOSED ALL ABOUT HIM HAD WE NOT ENDOWED HER HEART WITH ENOUGH STRENGTH TO KEEP ALIVE HER FAITH [IN OUR PROMISE]. AND SO SHE SAID TO HIS SISTER, "FOLLOW HIM" – AND [THE GIRL] WATCHED HIM FROM AFAR, WHILE THEY [WHO HAD TAKEN HIM IN] WERE NOT AWARE OF IT.

NOW FROM THE VERY BEGINNING WE CAUSED HIM TO REFUSE THE BREAST OF [EGYPTIAN] NURSES; AND [WHEN HIS SISTER CAME TO KNOW THIS,] SHE SAID: "SHALL I GUIDE YOU TO A FAMILY THAT MIGHT REAR HIM FOR YOU, AND LOOK AFTER HIM WITH GOOD WILL?"

AND THUS WE RESTORED HIM TO HIS MOTHER, SO THAT HER EYE MIGHT BE GLADDEDED, AND THAT SHE MIGHT Grieve NO LONGER, AND THAT SHE MIGHT KNOW THAT GOD'S PROMISE ALWAYS COMES TRUE – EVEN THOUGH MOST OF THEM NOW IT NOT! (28:1-13)

Sayid Qutb notes that the story of Musa is usually told in other surahs with episodes of his mission and not his birth – where strong faith stands in the face of cruel tyranny. Then faith emerges victorious and tyranny is defeated in the end. As for this episode, this is not the meaning that is intended. Instead it is that evil whenever it becomes full-blown it bears with it the causes of its own destruction. And tyranny whenever it rebels it does not need any human being to stamp it out. On the contrary the hand of power intervenes and takes the hand of the weak and abused and rescues them. It rescues the elements of goodness in them, nurtures them, and makes them leaders and inheritors in the land.

Before the actual story is told the Quran describes the atmosphere and circumstances in which the events unfolded.

"Behold, Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and divided its people into castes. One group of them he deemed utterly low; he would slaughter their sons and spare [only] their women: for, behold, he was one of those who spread corruption [on earth]."

But Allah wanted something different from what Pharaoh desired. And He willed something other than what the tyrant willed. The evil tyrants are always deceived by their power, their authority, and lives. They forget the will of Allah and His power. They believe that they choose for

themselves what they love and choose for their enemies what they will and they think that they can do either of the two.¹³⁴

"BUT IT WAS OUR WILL TO BESTOW OUR FAVOR UPON THOSE [VERY PEOPLE] WHO WERE DEEMED [SO] UTTERLY LOW, IN THE LAND, AND TO MAKE THEM FORERUNNERS IN FAITH, AND TO MAKE THEM HEIRS [TO PHARAOH'S GLORY] AND TO ESTABLISH THEM SECURELY ON EARTH, AND TO LET PHARAOH AND HAMAN AND THEIR HOSTS EXPERIENCE THROUGH THOSE [CHILDREN OF ISRAEL] THE VERY THING AGAINST WHICH THEY SOUGHT TO PROTECT THEMSELVES."

There is no doubt that Allah is able to empower his downtrodden servants within the period of a night and a day, indeed by the winkle of an eye.

"WHENEVER WE WILL ANYTHING TO BE, WE BUT SAY UNTO IT OUR WORD, "Be" – AND IT IS." (16:40)

Hence the people of truth should not try to hasten Allah's appointed time for their victory and empowerment. They must recognize the customary and natural procedures, which are legally recognized. And there must be patience in the religion of Allah Almighty.

"AND [KNOW THAT] HAD GOD SO WILLED, HE COULD INDEED PUNISH THEM [HIMSELF]; BUT [HE WILLS YOU TO STRUGGLE] SO AS TO TEST YOU [ALL] BY MEANS OF ONE ANOTHER." (47:4)

The story of Allah's empowerment and rescue begins with his saying,

"AND SO, [WHEN HE WAS BORN,] WE INSPIRED [THUS] THE MOTHER OF MUSA: "SUCCLE HIM [FOR A TIME], AND THEN, WHEN THOU HAST CAUSE TO FEAR FOR HIM, CAST HIM INTO THE RIVER, AND HAVE NO FEAR AND DO NOT Grieve – FOR WE SHALL RESTORE HIM TO THEE, AND SHALL MAKE HIM ONE OF OUR MESSAGE-BEARERS!" THIS PROPHET WITH WHOM ALLAH HONORS THE DOWNTRODDEN AND RAISES THE SLOGANS OF THE FAITH IS YET AN INFANT. AT THE TIME PHARAOH USED TO KILL THE SONS OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. THAT WAS OUT OF STUPIDITY BECAUSE HE BELIEVED WHAT WAS SAID THAT ONE FROM THEM WOULD DESTROY HIS KINGDOM. IF THIS WAS TRUE HIS ACTIONS DID NOT BENEFIT HIM. AND IF THIS WAS NOT TRUE THEN WHAT WAS THE WISDOM OF HIS DECISION TO SLAUGHTER THE MALES. "FOR ALLAH ALWAYS PREVAILS IN WHATEVER BE HIS PURPOSE." (12:21)

And Allah says,

“AND SO, [WHEN HE WAS BORN,] WE INSPIRED [THUS] THE MOTHER OF MUSA: “SUCKLE HIM [FOR A TIME], AND THEN, WHEN THOU HAST CAUSE TO FEAR FOR HIM, CAST HIM INTO THE RIVER.”¹³⁵

Allah Almighty does not burden any human being more than he is well able to bear. The people of truth must exert effort and even if it is small surely Allah Almighty will bless it and he will create the means that would empower Islam and its people. Here is this small boy falling into the hands of Pharaoh, yet he is in the care and protection of Allah.

Ibn Kathir commented, this and destiny declares, O despotic king deceived by the great numbers of his soldiers, power, strength and expanse of his authority; the Great One who is never overwhelmed nor vetoed has ruled. He whose decisions are never contradicted has decreed that this new born that you have adopted and because of whom you have killed souls that cannot be counted, his guardian will be found nowhere else except in your house and on your bed. He would not be nourished except with your food and drink in your home, and you are the one who would adopt him, sacrifice for him, and yet you would not be aware of the secret of his meaning. Then your destruction in this world and in the hereafter will be at his hands because of your violation of the clear truth that came to you and your denial of what was revealed to him. So that you and all the creation would know that the Lord of the heavens and the earth is the enforcer of whatever He wills. And that He is the Strong and Invincible, the Owner of supreme strength, capability, power and will, which cannot be deterred.¹³⁶

“NOW THE WIFE OF [PHARAOH SAID: “A JOY TO THE EYE [COULD THIS CHILD BE] FOR ME AND THEE! SLAY HIM NOT: HE MAY WELL BE OF USE TO US, OR WE MAY ADOPT HIM AS A SON!”] AND THEY HAD NO PRESENTIMENT [OF WHAT HE WAS TO BECOME].” CONCERNING THE STATEMENT MADE BY PHARAOH’S WIFE, ASIA; “A JOY TO THE EYE [COULD THIS CHILD BE] FOR ME AND THEE” THERE IS AN AUSPICIOUS SIGN. SHE ACHIEVED THE GOOD SHE HOPED FOR. AS FOR IN THIS WORLD ALLAH GUIDED HER THROUGH HIM [MUSA] AND BESTOWED ONE OF THE BEST PRAISES OF ANYONE IN THE HEREAFTER.

“AND FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ATTAINED TO FAITH GOD HAS PROPOUNDED A PARABLE IN [THE STORY OF] PHARAOH’S WIFE AS SHE PRAYED, “O MY SUSTAINER! BUILD THOU FOR ME A MANSION IN THE PARADISE [THAT IS] WITH THEE, AND SAVE ME FROM PHARAOH AND HIS DOINGS, AND SAVE ME FROM ALL EVILDOING FOLK!” (66:11)

Thus Allah Almighty guided her with obedience to the vastness of His paradise.

“On the morrow, however, an aching void grew up in the heart of the mother of Musa, and she would indeed have disclosed all about him had We not endowed her heart with enough strength to keep alive her faith [in Our promise].”

Al Qasimi said concerning the verse “On the morrow, however, an aching void grew up in the heart of the mother of Musa” that her heart became devoid of reason because of the excessive anguish that befell her and the astonishment that engulfed her mind when she learnt that Musa had fallen in the hands of Pharaoh. “And she would indeed have disclosed all about him” That is to say about his whereabouts, his story and that he is her son. “Had We not endowed her heart with enough strength to keep alive her faith [in Our promise].” In other words had We not inspired her heart with patience. Allah made an analogy with something that was about to get out of control but was tied in order to secure it and ensure calm. As for her faith [in Our promise] it relates to the promise of Allah to return the child to her. “For We shall restore him to thee.”

Al Zamakhshari says, her heart became free of anxiety when she heard that Pharaoh had shown sympathy for Musa and adopted him as she was at that point about to disclose that he was her son. She was unable to control her happiness and joy with what she heard. Allah reassured her heart and calmed the anxiety that overcame it because of the extreme happiness and delight she felt; knowing that she was among the believers who were convinced in the promise of Allah and not with Pharaoh’s adoption and sympathy.¹³⁷

Ibn Jarir believed that the most correct of those statements made in this regard is that which conveyed the meaning, and the heart of Musa’s mother became devoid of everything except the concern for Musa.¹³⁸

"AND SO SHE SAID TO HIS SISTER, "FOLLOW HIM" — AND [THE GIRL] WATCHED HIM FROM AFAR, WHILE THEY [WHO HAD TAKEN HIM IN] WERE NOT AWARE OF IT." PURSUE HIS TRACES AND THE NEWS ABOUT HIM. "AND [THE GIRL] WATCHED HIM FROM AFAR, WHILE THEY [WHO HAD TAKEN HIM IN] WERE NOT AWARE OF IT." THAT SHE LOOKED AT HIM IN DISGUISE, INDIRECTLY, AND SNEAKILY AND THEY DID NOT PERCEIVE THAT SHE WAS HIS SISTER.¹³⁹

"Now from the very beginning We caused him to refuse the breast of [Egyptian] nurses; and [when his sister came to know this,] she said: "Shall I guide you to a family that might rear him for you, and look after him with good will?" The power that protects him also plans his affair and uses him against Pharaoh and his folk. It makes them adopt him, love him; it makes them search intensely for someone to nurse him, it makes him reject all the wet nurses and makes them confused with him as he refuses each breast that is presented to him, while they fear that he would die or that he would wither away. Then his sister sees him from afar and recognizes him. And the power gives her an opportunity to draw their attention to a nurse so she says to them, "Shall I guide you to a family that might rear him for you, and look after him with good will?" They grabbed her words taking it as a good sign, hoping that if true the dear and beloved infant would be saved. The final episode describes how the absent infant is returned to his longing mother physically safe and exalted in station, protected by Pharaoh and cared for by his wife and while the fears of those around him grew he remained safe and secure. And the divine power contrived the first episode of its strange affair.¹⁴⁰

"AND THUS WE RESTORED HIM TO HIS MOTHER, SO THAT HER EYE MIGHT BE GLADDENED, AND THAT SHE MIGHT Grieve NO LONGER, AND THAT SHE MIGHT KNOW THAT GOD'S PROMISE ALWAYS COMES TRUE — EVEN THOUGH MOST OF THEM NOW IT NOT!"

THE BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL RESULTS

If oppression prevails and becomes excessive it clears the way for its own removal and destruction of the oppressor and his state. Shaykh al Islam says, (Verily Allah establishes the just state even if it is unbelieving but He does not establish the oppressive state even if it is a Muslim state).

Because Pharaoh orchestrated all the heinous crimes, claimed divinity and denied the Lord of mankind Allah Almighty brought about the demise of his power and helped the downtrodden. Allah said, "Behold, Pharaoh, exalted himself in the land and divided its people into castes. One group of them he deemed utterly low; he would slaughter their sons and spare [only] their women; for, behold, he was one of those who spread corruption [on earth]."

And Allah's saying, "We [now] convey unto thee some of the story of Musa and Pharaoh, setting forth the truth for [the benefit of] people who will believe" is a declaration of His care for the believers. Allah directs the believing people to this book. He raises them with it, establishes them and outlines for them a programme of life. He opens for them the way. This story, which is recited in this Surah is intended for the believers and they will benefit from it.

This direct recitation from Allah throws a shade of care and concern for the believers. It makes them become conscious of their great worth and exalted station. How? Allah the owner of all majesty and glory recites to His Prophet the book for them in this capacity that qualifies them for that generous care. "People who will believe"

And how much is there between Allah's saying

"BUT IT WAS OUR WILL TO BESTOW OUR FAVOR UPON THOSE [VERY PEOPLE] WHO WERE DEEMED [SO] UTTERLY LOW IN THE LAND, AND TO MAKE THEM FORERUNNERS IN FAITH, AND TO MAKE THEM HEIRS [TO PHARAOH'S GLORY], AND TO ESTABLISH THEM SECURELY ON EARTH;" (28:5)

and Musa' victory over Pharaoh and his soldiers. This matter functions according to certain universal and legal traditions [sunan]. And "God does not burden any human being with more than he is well able to bear." Hence the people of faith must grab hold of the available means. "And so, [when he was born,] we inspired [thus] the mother of Musa: "Suckle him [for a time]."" "And so she said to his sister, "Follow him."

This refers to the utmost effort made by the mother of the infant Musa to protect him. In reality though, the one who actually assumed his protection and help is Allah Almighty, the owner of majesty and glory. Of course, it was possible to have the protection and care without the means. As Sa'adi says, if Allah wants something to occur He creates for it the conditions and presents them one by one gradually and not at once.¹⁴¹

Allah Almighty inspires the people of faith with what is correct and rightly guided as He had ordered Musa' mother to say to his sister, "Follow him", even though that was among the causes of his success and the victory of the party of faith. And Pharaoh, may the cursed of the Eternal King be upon him, raised Musa in his home and attended to his interests. As is often said, he dug his grave with his own hoofs. The unbelievers and renegades engage in actions that that they think would bring them benefit and gain; yet they are the greatest sources of their own disappointment and loss. As Allah says;

"BEHOLD, THOSE WHO ARE BENT ON DENYING THE TRUTH ARE SPENDING THEIR RICHES IN ORDER TO TURN OTHERS AWAY FROM THE OATH OF GOD; AND THEY WILL GO ON SPENDING THEM UNTIL THEY BECOME [A SOURCE OF] INTENSE REGRET FOR THEM; AND THEN THEY WILL BE OVERCOME!"
(8:36)

This story illustrates the implanting of the people of faith even if their edge is blunted and the means at their disposal are few. And if the people of falsehood transgress, become vile and acquire all the means of repression and brutality, the people of faith must know that the help of Allah is imminent. They must, therefore, await His opening for them and establishment. As Allah says, "Had We not endowed her heart with enough strength to keep alive her faith." Meaning belief in the promise and help of Allah. Thus Allah clarifies in other verses what the people of faith should arm themselves with so that He would make them leaders. He says in Surah al Sajdah,

"AND [AS] WE RAISED AMONG THEM LEADERS WHO, SO LONG AS THEY BORE THEMSELVES WITH PATIENCE AND HAD SURE FAITH IN OUR MESSAGE." (32:24)

Sufyan ibn Ayanah said, when they took the head of affairs Allah made them heads.

Shaykh Abdur Rahman ibn Nasir al Sa'adi highlighted several benefits from the story of Musa' birth:

Among them is Allah's kindness to his mother with the inspiration that she should surrender her son and then the good news from Him that the baby would be returned to her. Without this she would have been overwhelmed by grief over her son. Then the baby was returned to her after it refused, by Allah's will, to be nursed. Thus it became known that the kindness of Allah for his friends cannot be envisaged by any mind and cannot be expressed by any words. Imagine this situation of good news that He delivered her son to her so that she would openly nurse him and that he would call his legitimate mother by Allah's will. Accordingly, her heart was reassured and her faith increased. And in this there was a confirmation of Allah's saying,

"BUT IT MAY WELL BE THAT YOU HATE A THING THE WHILE IT IS GOOD FOR YOU." (2:216)

There was nothing more repugnant to Musa' mother that he should fall into the hands of Pharaoh's family. Yet with this began the noble consequences and good effects.

That faith increases and decreases according to the saying of Allah, "to keep alive her faith [in our promises]". What is meant by faith here is its increase and pleasure.

That among the greatest favors of Allah upon His servant is His fortification of him in the face of anxiety and fears. For just as He increases his faith and provisions he is also enabled with correct sayings and actions, and his ideas and opinions remain firm. As for those who are not favored with this fortification, their ideas will be lost. Their minds shall be confused because of their anxiety and they will not benefit under these circumstances.

HIS YOUTH AND EMIGRATION TO MADYAN

Allah says,

“NOW WHEN [MUSA] REACHED FULL MANHOOD AND HAD BECOME MATURE [OF MIND], WE BESTOWED UPON HIM THE ABILITY TO JUDGE [BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG] AS WELL AS [INNATE] KNOWLEDGE: FOR THUS DO WE REWARD THE DOERS OF GOOD.

AND [ONE DAY] HE ENTERED THE CITY AT A TIME WHEN [MOST OF] ITS PEOPLE WERE [RESTING IN THEIR HOUSES,] UNAWARE OF WHAT WAS GOING ON [IN THE STREETS]; AND THERE HE ENCOUNTERED TWO MEN FIGHTING WITH ONE ANOTHER – ONE OF HIS OWN PEOPLE, AND THE OTHER OF HIS ENEMIES. AND THE ONE WHO BELONGED TO HIS OWN PEOPLE CRIED OUT TO HIM FOR HELP AGAINST HIM WHO WAS OF HIS ENEMIES – WHERE UPON MUSA STRUCK HIM DOWN WITH HIS FIST, AND [THUS] BROUGHT ABOUT HIS END.

[BUT THEN] HE SAID [TO HIMSELF]: “THIS IS OF SATAN’S DOING! VERILY, HE IS AN OPEN FOE, LEADING [MAN] ASTRAY!”

[AND] HE PRAYED: O MY SUSTAINER! VERILY, I HAVE SINNED AGAINST MYSELF! GRANT ME, THEN, THY FORGIVENESS!”

AND HE FORGAVE HIM – FOR, VERILY, HE ALONE IS TRULY FORGIVING, A DISPENSER OF GRACE.

SAID HE: “O MY SUSTAINER! [I VOW] BY ALL THE BLESSINGS WHICH THOU HAST BESTOWED ON ME: NEVERMORE SHALL I AID SUCH AS ARE LOST IN SIN!”

AND NEXT MORNING HE FOUND HIMSELF IN THE CITY, LOOKING FEARFULLY ABOUT HIM, WHEN LO! THE ONE WHO HAD SOUGHT HIS HELP THE DAY BEFORE [ONCE AGAIN] CRIED OUT TO HIM [FOR HELP – WHEREUPON] MUSA SAID UNTO HIM: “BEHOLD, THOU ART INDEED, MOST CLEARLY, DEEPLY IN THE WRONG!”

BUT THEN, AS SOON AS HE WAS ABOUT TO LAY VIOLENT HANDS ON THE MAN WHO WAS THEIR [COMMON] ENEMY, THE LATTER EXCLAIMED: “O MUSA, DOST THOU INTEND TO SLAY ME AS THOU DIDST SLAY ANOTHER MAN YESTERDAY? THY SOLE AIM IS TO BECOME A TYRANT IN THIS LAND,

FOR THOU DOST NOT CARE TO BE OF THOSE WHO WOULD SET THINGS TO RIGHTS!”

AND [THEN AND THERE] A MAN CAME RUNNING FROM THE FARTHERMOST END OF THE CITY, AND SAID: “O MUSA! BEHOLD, THE GREAT ONES [OF THE KINGDOM] ARE DELIBERATING UPON THY CASE WITH A VIEW TO KILLING THEE! BEGONE, THEN: VERILY, I AM OF THOSE WHO WISH THEE WELL!”

SO HE WENT FORTH FROM THENCE, LOOKING FEARFULLY ABOUT HIM, AND PRAYED: “O MY SUSTAINER! SAVE ME FROM ALL EVILDOING FOLK!”

AND AS HE TURNED HIS FACE TOWARDS MADYAN, HE SAID [TO HIMSELF]: “IT MAY WELL BE THAT MY SUSTAINER WILL [THUS] GUIDE ME ONTO THE RIGHT PATH!” (28:14-22)

Sayid Qutb notes that the text of the story is silent after this about several long years between the birth of Musa and the next episode, which depicts his youth and early adulthood. We do not know what occurred after he was returned to his mother so that she could nurse him nor of how he was raised in Pharaoh’s palace.

The text is silent about all of this and the next episode begins directly when he attains full maturity and balance, as Allah had given him wisdom and knowledge; He bestowed upon him the reward of those who do good. The attainment of complete bodily strength, mental balance and physical development usually takes place around the age of thirty. Did Musa remain in Pharaoh’s palace as the adopted child of Pharaoh and his wife until he reached that age? Or, did he break away from them and withdrew from the palace because his soul did not feel at ease with life in the shade of such a deplorable environment in which a pure and chosen soul as that of Musa could not feel at ease? We have no evidence but the wording of events thereafter sheds light on this matter as well as his acquisition of knowledge and wisdom.¹⁴² “Thus do We reward the doers of good.” It conforms also that he did good so Allah did good to him with wisdom and knowledge.

“And [one day] he entered the city at a time when [most of] its people were [resting in their houses,] unaware of what was going on [in the streets].” Ibn Kathir transmitted on the authority of ibn Abbas, Sa’eed

ibn Jubayir, Ikrimah, Qatadah and Sadi that this was at midday. Ibn Abbas reported it was between the two evening meals.

“And there he encountered two men fighting with one another.” “One of his own people” – an Israelite “and the other of his enemies” – a Copt. “And the one who belonged to his own people cried out to him for help against him who was of his enemies.” That was because Musa was well known in Egypt for his authority after he was adopted and raised as the son of Pharaoh in his house. The children of Israel had by that time grown stronger and had attained some measure of distinction, and their heads were raised because they had nursed Musa and were his uncles. So when this Israelite sought the help of Musa against the Copt Musa stepped forward and “struck him down with his fist.” Mujahid said, he punched him with the full force of his fist. Qatada said, with a rod that he was carrying and thus “brought about his end.” The Copt in question was a disbeliever in Allah Almighty and Musa did not intend to kill him, he merely intended to deter him. Hence Musa remarked,

“But then] he said [to himself]: “This is of Satan’s doing! Verily, he is an open foe, leading [man] astray!”

[And] he prayed: O my Sustainer! Verily, I have sinned against myself! Grant me, then, Thy forgiveness!”

And He forgave him – for, verily, He alone is truly forgiving, a dispenser of grace.”

Al Qurtubi observed, Musa regretted the blow, which caused the death of someone. His regret led him to humble himself before Allah and seek forgiveness from his sin. As for Qatada he mentioned that Musa turned to Allah, the One who creates openings, and sought His forgiveness. But Musa continued to count this against himself even though he knew that he was forgiven. To the extent that on the Day of Judgment he said, “verily I killed a soul and I was not ordered to do so.” This deep sense of sin led him to say, “I oppressed my self, so please forgive me.” For it was not fitting that a prophet should kill even if he was ordered to do so, and besides, the prophets used to feel sorry about things which others did not feel sorry for.¹⁴³

Salim ibn Abdullah said, O people of Iraq, I would not hold you to account for minor matters while I commit the major sins! I heard Abi

Abdullah ibn Umar say, I heard the Messenger of Allah say, the afflictions would come from here – and he pointed with his hand toward the east – from where the horns of the devil will appear and you would be striking the necks of each other and verily Musa killed Pharaoh’s countryman by error and Allah Almighty said, “Thou didst slay a man: but We did save thee from all grief, although We tried thee with various trials.”¹⁴⁴

“Said he: “O my Sustainer! [I vow] by all the blessings which Thou hast bestowed on me: nevermore shall I aid such as are lost in sin!”

Al Alousi recalled that the scholars used this verse to prevent the rendering of assistance and service to the oppressors. Abd ibn Humayid and ibn al Munthir and ibn Abi Hatim reported on the authority of Ubaydallah ibn al Walid al Rasafi that he asked Ata ibn Abi Rabah about his brother who was a scribe. He said to him, my brother has no affair with the sultan except that he writes for him with his pen about earnings and spending, if he leaves his pen he will incur debt and be in need, and if he takes it along with him he will earn. He asked, for whom does he write? He replied for Khalid ibn Abdullah al Qasri. He said did you not hear what the righteous servant say, “Said he: “O my Sustainer! [I vow] by all the blessings which Thou hast bestowed on me: never more shall I aid such as are lost in sin!” For as long as your brother is devoted to something and uses his pen Allah will provide his sustenance. There is no movement or power except with Allah Almighty the Most High, Most Powerful. And what regret will befall him who sells his religion for a worldly gain and buys the pleasure of the oppressors at the cost of angering his Lord. The matter has come to a head and evil has traversed its limits.¹⁴⁵

“And next morning he found himself in the city, looking fearfully about him, when lo! The one who had sought his help the day before [once again] cried out to him for help.”

Ibn Kathir commented that the following morning Musa appeared in the city fearful of Pharaoh and his folk when he knew about the murdered victim whose fate was drawn to their attention. In fact Musa killed him while coming to the assistance of an Israelite man. Thus their doubts became stronger that Musa was actually from among the children of Israel, a matter if confirmed, would have serious consequences. Thus

the following morning he appeared in the city looking fearful. And it was during this time the same Israelite whom he helped the day before was again shouting to him for assistance against another man. Musa rebuked and cursed him for his persistent involvement in evil and fighting. He said to him, "Behold, thou art indeed, most clearly, deeply in the wrong!" Then he wanted to pummel the Copt who was their common enemy and thereby drive back and get rid of him. So when Musa decided to do this and advanced toward the Copt he said, "O Musa, Dost thou intend to slay me as thou didst slay another man yesterday? Thy sole aim is to become a tyrant in this land, for thou dost not care to be of those who would set things to rights!"

Al Alousi pointed out that the Taurat, which is in the hands of the Jews today is not clear whether these two men were from the children of Israel. As for the two men that he saw the day before, one of them was an Israelite and the other was a Copt. He further emphasized that this Taurat should not be considered where it contradicts the Quran and Prophetic traditions. Like all the reports of the children of Israel it should not be believed or denied. Yes, in some instances one may acquaint oneself of its content, but know that what it contains concerning the story of Musa is contrary to what Allah narrates. In all matters there are additions and omissions and this is apparent to whoever considers them and the ruling considering this is clear.¹⁴⁶

"Thy sole aim is to become a tyrant in this land, for thou dost not care to be of those who would set things to rights!"

Sayid Qutb notes that Musa had adopted a pattern of live for which it became known that he was a righteous man who loved to do good and disliked injustice and tyranny. This Copt reminded him of this and accuses him of contradicting what he is known for and that he wants to be a tyrant and not a reformer.¹⁴⁷

"And [then and there] a man came running from the farthest end of the city, and said: "O Musa! Behold, the great ones [of the kingdom] are deliberating upon thy case with a view to killing thee! Begone, then: verily, I am of those who wish thee well!"

The fact that this man was a believer from among Pharaoh's folk made him famous. He came walking hurriedly because of the distance he had

to travel and his eagerness to inform and advise Musa.

"So he went forth from thence, looking fearfully about him, and prayed: "O my Sustainer! Save me from all evildoing folk! And as he turned his face towards Madyan, he said [to himself]: "It may well be that my Sustainer will [thus] guide me onto the right path!"

He headed in the direction of Madyan, the village of Shuayb called Madyan ibn Ibrahim. It was not under the authority of Pharaoh. It was some distance away from Egypt. Musa did not know the way towards it. As ibn Abbas reported he left with no knowledge about the road except sound faith in his Lord.

BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL RESULTS

"Musa said unto him: "Behold, thou art indeed, most clearly, deeply in the wrong!"

This man was certainly misguided as seen by his constant fighting and confrontations, which bore no fruits except to bring about reprisals upon the children of Israel. They were incapable of staging a revolt, too weak to bring about a productive movement. Hence there was no value in such confrontations which caused harm rather benefit.

"So he went forth from thence, looking fearfully about him, and prayed: "O my Sustainer! Save me from all evildoing folk!"

And as he turned his face towards Madyan, he said [to himself]: "It may well be that my Sustainer will [thus] guide me onto the right path!"

Here the blessing of prayer, hope, and trust in Allah Almighty is expressed. For Musa left fearful, expelled and alone. He did not prepare to travel and he did not take anything to guide him along the way. But he turned to Allah in prayer firstly to deliver him from the oppressive people. Then he pleaded for guidance to the right path. And this is always the method of the believer. His heart is always attached to Allah seeking goodness from him. A believer is quick to turn toward his Lord with supplication and in hope in times of hardship. This trust and confidence in Allah compensates the believers for their scanty means and opens for them doors that were once closed.

On Allah's saying, "And [then and there] a man came running from the

farthermost end of the city", al Qurtubi and other scholars took this as evidence to approve 'informing' in order to protect religious interests.

Shaykh Abdur Rahman ibn Nasir as Sa'adi pointed out if someone fears suffering death wrongfully if he stays in a particular place, he should not surrender himself to destruction but should flee that place to the best of his ability as Musa did.

He added, if there is no escape from committing one of two serious deeds, it is better to do the lesser of the two, the easier to repel than what is greater and more dangerous. When Musa was faced with the choice of remaining in Egypt and be killed or going to a distant land to which he did not know the way, and for which he had no guide except his Lord, he chose the latter when it became known that it was better for his safety.¹⁴⁸

The story contains a subtle indication that if at a time of need the individual is faced with two views, neither of which carry a greater weight over the other, then he should seek the help and guidance of his Lord to the right after intending the truth with his heart and searching for it. Allah does not disappoint whoever is in this circumstance. As was the case of Musa when he turned towards Madyan and did not know the exact way to get there. He said, "It may well be that my Sustainer will [thus] guide me onto the right path!" And Allah did indeed guide him and gave him what he hoped and yearned for.¹⁴⁹

Shaykh Abu Bakr al Jaza'iri wrote in "Hidayah al Ayaat" that this episode demonstrates:

Gratitude for favors. When Allah forgave Musa he thanked him and promised never to stand on the side of a criminal.

The danger of associating with evildoers. The Israelite because of his stupidity and wrongdoing caused Musa much trouble.

Natural fear should not be condemned. Musa' fear led him to turn toward Allah with prayer and Allah answered him. To Him belong all praise and benevolence.

HIS STAY AND MARRIAGE IN MADYAN

Allah Almighty says,

"WHEN HE ARRIVED AT THE WELLS OF MADYAN, HE FOUND THERE A LARGE GROUP OF MEN WHO WERE WATERING [THEIR HERDS AND FLOCKS]; AND AT SOME DISTANCE FROM THEM HE CAME UPON TWO WOMEN WHO WERE KEEPING BACK THEIR FLOCK. HE ASKED [THEM]: "WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH YOU?" THEY ANSWERED: "WE CANNOT WATER [OUR ANIMALS] UNTIL THE HERDSMEN DRIVE [THEIRS] HOME – FOR [WE ARE WEAK AND] OUR FATHER IS A VERY OLD MAN."

SO HE WATERED [THEIR FLOCK] FOR THEM; AND THEN HE WITHDREW INTO THE SHADE AND PRAYED: "O MY SUSTAINER! VERILY, IN DIRE NEED AM I OF ANY GOOD WHICH THOU MAYEST BESTOW UPON ME!"

[SHORTLY] AFTERWARDS, ONE OF THE TWO [MAIDENS] APPROACHED HIM, WALKING SHYLY, AND SAID: "BEHOLD, MY FATHER INVITES THEE, SO THAT HE MIGHT DULY REWARD THEE FOR THY HAVING WATERED [OUR FLOCK] FOR US." AND AS SOON AS [MUSA] CAME UNTO HIM AND TOLD HIM THE STORY [OF HIS LIFE], HE SAID: "HAVE NO FEAR! THOU ART NOW SAFE FROM THOSE EVILDOING FOLK!"

SAID ONE OF THE TWO [DAUGHTERS]: "O MY FATHER! HIRE HIM: FOR, BEHOLD, THE BEST [MAN] THAT THOU COULDST HIRE IS ONE WHO IS [AS] STRONG AND WORTHY OF TRUST [AS HE]!"

[AFTER SOME TIME, THE FATHER] SAID: "BEHOLD, I AM WILLING TO LET THEE WED ONE OF THESE TWO DAUGHTERS OF MINE ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THOU WILT REMAIN EIGHT YEARS IN MY SERVICE; AND IF THOU SHOULDST COMPLETE TEN [YEARS], THAT WOULD BE [AN ACT OF GRACE] FROM THEE, FOR I DO NOT WANT TO IMPOSE ANY HARDSHIP ON THEE: [ON THE CONTRARY,] THOU WILT FOND ME, IF GOD SO WILLS, RIGHTEOUS IN ALL MY DEALINGS."

ANSWERED [MUSA]: "THUS SHALL IT BE BETWEEN ME AND THEE! WHICHEVER OF THE TWO TERMS I FULFILL, LET THERE BE NO ILL-WILL AGAINST ME. AND GOD BE WITNESS TO ALL THAT WE SAY!" (28:23-28)

Sayid Qutb wrote the long and difficult journey took him to the waters of Madyan. He reached it and that required great effort and strug-

gle. He looked toward it and saw something which no honorable human being as good-natured as Musa would feel comfortable about. He saw a number of male shepherds gathering their animals to water them and two women keeping back their flock from the water.

He asked [them]: "What is the matter with you?" They answered: "We cannot water [our animals] until the herdsmen drive [theirs] home – for [we are weak and] our father is a very old man." They told him the reason for their withdrawal, delay and decision to hold back their animals from drinking. "So he watered [their flock] for them; and then he withdrew into the shade." This indicates that the time was midsummer and hot. And, that the journey was undertaken during that time. Thus he prayed, "O my Sustainer! Verily, in dire need am I of any good which Thou mayest bestow upon me!" Al Alousi pointed out that he [Musa] was in need of anything that He may bestow from the vastness of His generosity, be it plenty or little.¹⁵⁰

Another interpretation of this verse offered by al Zamakhshari is the possibility that Musa was in need of a favor in this world because of the religious good that was bestowed upon him. That favor was deliverance from the oppressors because when he was with Pharaoh he had possessions and material comfort. He said that in delight with the remarkable change that had taken place in his life and out of gratitude to Allah. The first interpretation is clearer and more befitting with the context.

"[Shortly] afterwards, one of the two [maidens] approached him, walking shyly, and said: "Behold, my father invites thee, so that he might duly reward thee for thy having watered [our flock] for us." And as soon as [Musa] came unto him and narrated the story [of his life], he said: "Have no fear! Thou art now safe from those evildoing folk!"

In the words of al Zamakhshari she came shyly and covered. Some say she was covered with the sleeve of her coat.¹⁵¹ In fact she was not of those women who were accustomed to much walking about.

"And as soon as [Musa] came unto him and told him the story [of his life], he said: "Have no fear! Thou art now safe from those evildoing folk!"

There are, according to ibn Kathir some differences of opinion among the scholars about who this venerable man was. Some believe he was

Shuayb. This is, indeed, a popular view among many. Hasan al Basri and Malik ibn Anas were among the scholars who wrote about this. There is, however, some reservation about the chain of narrators in the hadith concerning him.

Writing in *Fi Thilal al Quran*, Sayid Qutb notes it is possible that this man may or may not have been Shuayb and that his own inclination was that he was not. On the contrary, he may have been an elder in Madyan. The evidence is that this person was well advanced in age whereas Shuayb had witnessed the destruction of his people who had rejected him after only a few had believed in his message. Furthermore, if he was Shuayb – the prophet – he dwelled among the remaining believers of his people, they would not have allowed their animals to drink before that of the daughters of their prophet, the venerable elder. This is not the way of a believing people. This is not the manner they would have conducted their affairs with their prophet or his daughters from the first generation. Added to this, the Quran does not mention anything about his instruction of Musa, his in-law. If Shuayb was a prophet we would have heard something about this from Musa who had lived with him for ten years.¹⁵²

"Said one of the two [daughters]: "O my father! Hire him: for, behold, the best [man] that thou couldst hire is one who is [as] strong and worthy of trust [as he]!"

Al Qurtubi concluded from this statement that hiring was legitimate and well known among them, as it was among all peoples. It is a natural necessity and an advantage gained from the mixing of people as opposed to the deaf who were to its usage even deafer.¹⁵³

With regard to her saying, "the best [man] that thou couldst hire is one who is [as] strong and worthy of trust [as he]", al Zamakhshari said these are wise words to which nothing can be added. Because if these two qualities, capability and trustworthiness, are present in the one who oversees your affairs your mind would be at ease and your aims fulfilled. She was satisfied to posit this statement whose wording was the type of proverbs and good judgment when she said hire him for his strength and trustworthiness.¹⁵⁴

"[After some time, the father] said: "Behold, I am willing to let thee

wed one of these two daughters of mine on the understanding that thou wilt remain eight years in my service; and if thou shouldst complete ten [years], that would be [an act of grace] from thee, for I do not want to impose any hardship on thee: [on the contrary,] thou wilt fond me, if God so wills, righteous in all my dealings.”

This shows how the guardian may present his daughter to a man, and this is an established tradition. Salih of Madyan offered his daughter to Salih of the children of Israel and Umar ibn al Khattab offered his daughter Hafsa to Abu Bakr and Uthman and al Mawhubah offered herself in marriage to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

This verse also suggests that the father should marry his virgin daughter who has attained maturity even without seeking her permission. Imam Malik held this view using this verse as evidence. Abu Hanifa said if she attains maturity she should not be married without her consent because she has attained the age of responsibility.

“Answered [Musa]: “Thus shall it be between me and thee! Whichever of the two terms I fulfill, let there be no ill-will against me. And God be witness to all that we say!”

Musa told his in law there should be no blame upon him for any of the two terms that he served, as Allah is a witness and hearer of what they say and He oversees our affairs. Despite this, Musa completed the term with two extra years making a total of ten.

Sa'eed ibn Jubair narrated, “A Jew from al Hirah asked me which of the two terms did Musa serve? I said I don't know permit me to ask a learned Arab. So I went and asked ibn Abbas and he said, he served the longer and better of the two. Surely if a messenger of Allah says

BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL RESULTS

“Behold, I am willing to let thee wed” Our scholars have famously said, marriage is contracted with the expressions – al tazwij and al nikah – both of which bear the same meaning of wedding. Imam Abu Hanifa said it is contracted with all the expressions that imply transfer of permanent possession.¹⁵⁵

As for marriage with tenancy, it is clear from the verse and it is a matter that has been endorsed by our law. It is applied to one who has no possession except some verse of the Quran according to the imams. In some narrations the Prophet ﷺ said, “what have you memorized from the Quran?” he said, Surah al Baqarah and the one that comes after it. Prophet said, then teach her twenty verses and she is your woman.”¹⁵⁶

“On the understanding that thou wilt remain eight years in my service.” This, according to al Qurtubi, mentions absolute help. Imam Malik said, it is permissible and found in tradition and does not require naming the type of service. It is clear in the story of Musa, which mentions absolute help. Abu Hanifa and al Shafiee said it is not permissible until it is named because it is unknown.

The scholars differ about the necessity of witnesses for the wedding. There are two main views in this regard; one of them is that it is not contracted except with two witnesses. This is the view of Abu Hanifa and al Shafiee. As for Imam Malik he said that it is contracted without witnesses because it is a contract of mutual consent for which witnesses are not conditional. What is conditional though, is that it be announced and made known because that is what distinguishes between marriage and adultery or fornication.¹⁵⁷

Shaykh Abdur Rahman ibn Nasir said, if a servant carries out a deed sincerely for the sake of Allah and then obtains a reward for it without intending it, he is not rebuked for this and his sincerity and reward is not questioned as Musa accepted the reward which he did not request or look forward to from the man from Madyan as compensation for his good deed.

He further added that among the greatest forms of good character is to act kindly toward everyone that one comes into contact with from a servant to wife, child, and others. This includes reducing the workload of

the worker in accord with the saying of Allah, "for I do not want to impose any hardship on thee: [on the contrary,] thou wilt fond me, if God so wills, righteous in all my dealings." Of course the verse also demonstrates that there is no harm that the employer should encourage his worker with rewards and prizes. This can also be described as kindness, providing it is done sincerely.

As for Sayid Qutb he declared, with this simplicity and clarity the Islamic society built its homes and established its structure without any hesitation, incoherence and crookedness.

Thus did the venerable man – Musa' friend – he proposed to Musa that offer, promising not to make it difficult for him and not to burden him with work; hoping by the will of Allah that Musa would find him among the righteous in their deeds and loyalty. It is a good ethic in speaking about the self and beside Allah. He does not recommend himself and does not pretend that he is among the righteous but he hopes that he is so and he entrusts the matter to the will of Allah. Musa accepted the offer and he signed the contract in clarity and precision.¹⁵⁸

THE STORY OF HIS DEPARTURE WITH HIS FAMILY, HIS CALL, AND APPOINTMENT BY ALLAH WITH PROPHETHOOD

Allah says,

AND WHEN MUSA HAD FULFILLED HIS TERM, AND WAS WANDERING WITH HIS FAMILY [IN THE DESERT], HE PERCEIVED A FIRE ON THE SLOPE OF MOUNT SINAI; [AND SO] HE SAID TO HIS FAMILY; "WAIT HERE. BEHOLD, I PERCEIVE A FIRE [FAR AWAY]; PERHAPS I MAY BRING YOU FROM THERE SOME TIDING, OR [AT LEAST] A BURNING BRAND FROM THE FIRE, SO THAT YOU MIGHT WARM YOURSELVES."

BUT WHEN HE CAME CLOSE TO IT, A CALL WAS SOUNDED FROM THE RIGHT-SIDE BANK OF THE VALLEY, OUT OF THE TREE [BURNING] ON BLESSED GROUND: 'O MUSA! VERILY, I AM GOD, THE SUSTAINER OF ALL THE WORLDS!'

AND [THEN He said]: "THROW DOWN THEY STAFF!" BUT AS SOON AS [MUSA] SAW IT MOVE RAPIDLY, AS OF IT WERE A SNAKE, HE DREW BACK [IN TERROR], AND DID NOT [DARE TO] RETURN.

[AND GOD SPOKE TO HIM AGAIN:] "O MUSA! DRAW NEAR, AND HAVE NO FEAR – FOR, BEHOLD, THOU ART OF THOSE WHO ARE SECURE [IN THIS WORLD AND IN THE NEXT]!"

"[AND NOW] PUT THY HAND INTO THY BOSOM; IT WILL COME FORTH [SHINING] WHITE, WITHOUT BLEMISH. AND [HENCEFORTH] HOLD THINE ARM CLOSE TO THYSELF, FREE OF ALL FEAR.

THESE, THEN SHALL BE THE TWO SIGNS [OF THY BEARING A MESSAGE] FROM THY SUSTAINER UNTO PHARAOH AND HIS GREAT ONES – FOR, BEHOLD, THEY ARE A PEOPLE DEPRAVED!"

SAID [MUSA]: "O MY SUSTAINER! I HAVE SLAIN ONE OF THEM, AND SO I FEAR THEY WILL SLAY ME... AND MY BROTHER AARON – HE IS FAR BETTER IN SPEECH THAN I AM. SEND HIM, THEREFORE, AS A HELPER, SO THAT HE MIGHT [MORE ELOQUENTLY] BEAR WITNESS TO MY SPEAKING THE TRUTH: FOR I FEAR INDEED THAT THEY WILL GIVE ME THE LIE."

SAID HE: "WE SHALL STRENGTHEN THINE ARM THROUGH THY BROTHER, AND ENDOW BOTH OF YOU WITH POWER, SO THAT THEY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO

TOUCH YOU: BY VIRTUE OF OUR MESSAGES SHALL YOU TWO, AND ALL WHO FOLLOW YOU, PREVAIL!" (28:29-35)

Concerning Allah's saying, "And when Musa had fulfilled his term, and was wandering with his family [in the desert]" Ibn Kathir said, this took place on a cold night and they lost their way as they drifted away from the known route. He began to flicker his fire stick but did not see anything as the darkness and cold became more intense.

While he was doing this he sighted a fire in the distance burning on the side of Mount Sinai, it was the mountain to his west on the right. "[And so] he said to his family; "Wait here. Behold, I perceive a fire [far away]" As if he had seen it and they had not, because this fire was in reality light, which not everyone was capable of perceiving. "Perhaps I may bring you from there some tiding." Meaning perhaps from it I would find out the way. "Or [at least] a burning brand from the fire, so that you might warm yourselves." This shows that they had lost their way on this cold and dark night.

"But when he came close to it, a call was sounded from the right-side bank of the valley, out of the tree [burning] on blessed ground: 'O Musa! Verily, I am God, the Sustainer of all the worlds!'"

Ibn Kathir explained, the one that is addressing you [Musa] is the Lord of the worlds, who does whatever He wills, there is no God beside Him and no Lord but Him the Sublime. He is in His being, qualities, sayings and doings pure and free of any similarity in the creations.

And His saying,

"THROW DOWN THEY STAFF!" THAT IS THE ONE IN YOUR HAND AS WAS CONFIRMED IN HIS SAYING, "NOW, WHAT IS THIS IN THY RIGHT HAND, O MUSA?" HE ANSWERED: "IT IS MY STAFF; I LEAN ON IT; AND WITH IT I BEAT DOWN LEAVES FOR MY SHEEP; AND [MANY] OTHER USES HAVE I FOR IT." (20:17-8)

The meaning: as for this your staff, which you are acquainted with, throw it down. "So he threw it – and lo! It was a snake, moving rapidly." He knew and confirmed that the one who spoke to him is the one who said to a thing be and it is.

"But as soon as [Musa] saw it move rapidly" or in other words gyrate as if it was a snake, he drew back [in terror], and did not [dare to] return.

In fact he did not look because it is the human nature to turn away from such so when Allah said to him, "O Musa! Draw near, and have no fear – for, behold, thou art of those who are secure [in this world and in the next!]" He returned and stopped in his first position. Then Allah said, "And now] put thy hand into thy bosom; it will come forth [shining] white, without blemish." That is if you place your hand in your bosom and take it out it would glimmer as if it was a piece of the moon in shining lightening. Thus he said, "without blemish." "And [henceforth] hold thine arm close to thyself, free of all fear."

His saying, "These, then shall be the two signs [of thy bearing a message] from thy Sustainer;" refers to the throwing of the staff and its change into a moving snake and the placing of his hand in his bosom and its emergence white without blemish. Two clear and indelible signs of the power of the doer and chooser and the truth of the prophethood of the one by whose hand this miracle was enacted. Thus Allah Almighty says, "Unto Pharaoh and his great ones", meaning the chiefs, followers and prominent people. "Behold, they are a people depraved!" They are in open rebellion against obedience to Allah, disregarding His orders and religion.¹⁵⁹

Said [Musa]: "O my Sustainer! I have slain one of them, and so I fear they will slay me... And my brother Aaron – he is far better in speech than I am. Send him, therefore, as a helper, so that he might [more eloquently] bear witness to my speaking the truth: for I fear indeed that they will give me the lie."

Al Alousi wrote the objective of this statement is to request protection and support in order to deliver the message in the most perfect manner. It is not a plea for exemption from being sent. The Jews claim that he requested from his Lord, Glorified be He, to exempt him from the mission. His statement, "And my brother Aaron – he is far better in speech than I am", confirms his request for support and help.

Musa' remark, "he is far better in speech than I am" suggests that he was articulate but that his brother was even more so than he.¹⁶⁰

Said He: "We shall strengthen thine arm through thy brother, and endow both of you with power, so that they will not be able to touch you: by virtue of Our messages shall you two, and all who follow you, prevail!"

Sayid Qutb writes, his Lord answered his plea and strengthened him with his brother. He further increased what he pleaded for with glad tidings and assurance. "And endow both of you with power" for they were not going to confront the tyrannical Pharaoh empty-handed. Instead they were going to be equipped with a power before which no power in the earth can stand up to. With it, no despot or dictator would harm them. "So that they will not be able to touch you." The power from Allah forms a fence around you, a fortification and refuge.

The glad tidings did not stop there, but that the truth would be victorious. The triumph would be for the signs of Allah, which they wield against the tyrant. For it alone is the weapon of power and instrument of success and triumph, "by virtue of Our messages shall you two, and all who follow you, prevail!"¹⁶

THE MEETING BETWEEN MUSA AND PHARAOH AND THE MAGICIANS' DECLARATION OF FAITH

Allah Almighty says,

AND AFTER THOSE [EARLY PEOPLE] WE SENT MUSA WITH OUR MESSAGE UNTO PHARAOH AND HIS GREAT ONES, AND THEY WILLFULLY REJECTED THEM: AND BEHOLD WHAT HAPPENED IN THE END TO THOSE SPREADERS OF CORRUPTION!

AND MUSA SAID: "O PHARAOH! VERILY, I AM AN APOSTLE FROM THE SUSTAINER OF ALL THE WORLDS, SO CONSTITUTED THAT I CANNOT SAY ANYTHING ABOUT GOD BUT THE TRUTH. I HAVE NOW COME UNTO YOU WITH A CLEAR EVIDENCE FROM YOUR SUSTAINER: LET, THEN, THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL GO WITH ME!"

SAID [PHARAOH]: "IF THOU HAST COME WITH A SIGN, PRODUCE IT — IF THOU ART A MAN OF TRUTH!" THEREUPON MUSA THREW DOWN HIS STAFF, AND LO! IT WAS A SERPENT, PLAINLY VISIBLE; AND HE DREW FORTH HIS HAND, AND LO! IT APPEARED [SHINING] WHITE TO THE BEHOLDERS.

THE GREAT ONES AMONG PHARAOH'S PEOPLE SAID: "VERILY, THIS IS INDEED A SORCERER OF GREAT KNOWLEDGE, WHO WANTS TO DRIVE YOU OUT OF YOUR LAND!" [SAID PHARAOH:] "WHAT, THEN, DO YOU ADVISE?" THEY ANSWERED: "LET HIM AND HIS BROTHER WAIT AWHILE, AND SEND

UNTO ALL CITIES HERALDS WHO SHALL BRING BEFORE THEE EVERY SORCERER OF GREAT KNOWLEDGE."

AND THE SORCERERS CAME UNTO PHARAOH [AND] SAID: "VERILY, WE OUGHT TO HAVE A GREAT REWARD IF IT IS WE WHO PREVAIL." ANSWERED [PHARAOH]: "YES; AND, VERILY, YOU SHALL BE AMONG THOSE WHO ARE NEAR UNTO ME." THEY SAID: "O MUSA! EITHER TO SHALT THROW [THY STAFF FIRST], OR WE SHALL [BE THE FIRST TO] THROW."

HE ANSWERED: "YOU THROW [FIRST]." AND WHEN THEY THREW DOWN [THEIR STAFFS], THEY CAST A SPELL UPON THE PEOPLE'S EYES, AND STRUCK THEM WITH AWE, AND [PRODUCED MIGHTY SORCERY].

AND [THEN] WE INSPIRED MUSA, "THROW DOWN THY STAFF!" — AND LO! IT SWALLOWED UP ALL THEIR DECEPTIONS: AND WHEREUPON THE TRUTH WAS ESTABLISHED, AND VAIN WAS PROVED ALL THAT THEY HAD BEEN DOING. AND THUS WERE THEY VANQUISHED THERE AND THEN, AND BECAME UTTERLY HUMILIATED.

AND DOWN FELL THE SORCERERS, PROSTRATING THEMSELVES AND EXCLAIMING; "WE HAVE COME TO BELIEVE IN THE SUSTAINER OF ALL THE WORLDS, THE SUSTAINER OF MUSA AND AARON!" SAID PHARAOH: "HAVE YOU COME TO BELIEVE IN HIM ERE I HAVE GIVEN YOU PERMISSION? BEHOLD, THIS IS INDEED A PLOT WHICH YOU HAVE CUNNINGLY DEVISED IN THIS [MY] CITY IN ORDER TO DRIVE OUT ITS PEOPLE HENCE! BUT IN TIME YOU SHALL COME TO KNOW [MY REVENGE]: MOST CERTAINLY SHALL I CUT OFF YOUR HANDS AND YOUR FEET IN GREAT NUMBERS, BECAUSE OF [YOUR] PERVERSENESS, AND THEN I SHALL MOST CERTAINLY CRUCIFY YOU IN GREAT NUMBERS, ALL TOGETHER!"

THEY ANSWERED; "VERILY, UNTO OUR SUSTAINER DO WE TURN — FOR THOU TAKEST VENGEANCE ON US ONLY BECAUSE WE HAVE COME TO BELIEVE IN OUR SUSTAINER'S MESSAGES AS SOON AS THEY CAME TO US. O OUR SUSTAINER! SHOWER US WITH PATIENCE IN ADVERSITY, AND MAKE US DIE AS MEN WHO HAVE SURRENDERED THEMSELVES UNTO THEE!"

(7:103-126)

Concerning His saying, "and they willfully rejected them", the eminent Shaykh Muhammad Rashid Rida said, they wronged themselves and their people by their disbelief in the message out of arrogance and ingratitude. Thus they bore the sin of this and the sin of their people who were

denied faith by following them. Likewise they would have had the same reward as their leaders if they believed and they followed them. To sum up, Musa was a prophet to his people Bani Israel particularly and to Pharaoh and his great people secondly.¹⁶¹

And His saying, "unto Pharaoh", Al Alousi mentioned it was the name of a person and later became a title of all the Amaleeq rulers of Egypt. It was a title that was used in the same manner that Khosrau was the title of the rulers of Persia, and Caesar the title of the rulers of Rome, Nagashi was the title of the Ethiopian rulers, and Tuba' of Yemen.¹⁶²

Musa said: "O Pharaoh! Verily, I am an apostle from the Sustainer of all the worlds, so constituted that I cannot say anything about God but the truth. I have now come unto you with a clear evidence from your Sustainer: let, then, the children of Israel go with me!"

Al Alousi says, "so constituted that I cannot say anything about God but the truth", means it is befitting of me and expected because of what I know from my station. "I have now come unto you with a clear evidence from your Sustainer: let, then, the children of Israel go with me!" Ibn al Jawzi explained, let them go, as he had used them to perform hard labour.¹⁶³

Said [Pharaoh]: "If thou hast come with a sign, produce it – if thou art a man of truth!" thereupon Musa threw down his staff, and lo! It was a serpent, plainly visible; and he drew forth his hand, and lo! It appeared [shining] white to the beholders. The great ones among Pharaoh's people said: "Verily, this is indeed a sorcerer of great knowledge, who wants to drive you out of your land!" [Said Pharaoh:] "What, then, do you advise?"

About Allah's saying, "Verily, this is indeed a sorcerer of great knowledge", Al Zamakhshari explained, knowledgeable of magic and its nature. He deceived the eyes of the people with trickery so that they thought that the stick was a snake and the skin white. If these words were ascribed to Pharaoh in Surah al Shu'ara (the Poets) they are ascribed to his great ones here. He said it and they said it, his saying and theirs were narrated. He declared it in the beginning and his great ones took it from him and passed it on to their offspring.¹⁶⁴

The great ones said: "Let him and his brother wait awhile, and send

unto all cities heralds who shall bring before thee every sorcerer of great knowledge." Al Qasimi explained, delay their affair and send them away until they see your opinion about them, and you plan their affair so that they do not ascribe it to evident oppression.

Abu Mansur said, the order to delay indicated that he advanced something else. That was the preoccupation to kill him. They said, delay it so that the truth about him would be made evident to the people.¹⁶⁵

And the sorcerers came unto Pharaoh [and] said: 'Verily, we ought to have a great reward if it is we who prevail.' Answered [Pharaoh]: "Yes; and, verily, you shall be among those who are near unto me." When they received assurance from Pharaoh they said, "O Musa! Either thou shalt throw [thy staff first], or we shall [be the first to] throw." They said, give Musa the choice to expose himself to destruction, they did not care whether he advanced or delayed.

Al Zamakhshari believed their allowing a choice was good and considerate, as the people of trade do if they encounter the craftsmen before they engage in arguments and the wrestlers before they begin to wrestle.¹⁶⁶

Al Qurtubi mentioned they were polite with Musa and that was the cause of their faith.¹⁶⁷ Musa said, "You throw [first]." "And when they threw down [their staffs], they cast a spell upon the people's eyes, and struck them with awe, and produced mighty sorcery". Al Qasimi stated he allowed them to throw first out of contempt for their affair and little concern for them. At the same time to demonstrate his confidence in the divine support and that a miracle could never be overwhelmed by magic.¹⁶⁸

And [then] We inspired Musa, "Throw down thy staff!" – and lo! It swallowed up all their deceptions: and whereupon the truth was established, and vain was proved all that they had been doing. And thus were they vanquished there and then, and became utterly humiliated."

Sayid Qutb remarked, it is falsehood becoming inflated, deceiving the eyes, seeking to drive fear into the hearts and give the impression to many that it is triumphant. And that it is violent and capable. However, when it comes face to face with quiet and confident truth, it bursts like a bubble, recoils like a hedgehog and outs like the flicker of a grass. Thus,

the truth was superior in weight, firm in its pillars and deep in its roots. The Quranic expression here casts this shade and presents the truth in reality with full force. "Whereupon the truth was established." It became entrenched and secure and everything beside it vanished and had no existence thereafter.

"And vain was proved all that they had been doing." Falsehood and its perpetrators were defeated; they were humiliated and cut down to size. They were forced to recoil after flaunting that which deceived the eyes. "And thus were they vanquished there and then, and became utterly humiliated."

But the shock has not yet ended and the encounter still holds other big surprises. "And down fell the sorcerers, prostrating themselves and exclaiming; "We have come to believe in the Sustainer of all the worlds, the Sustainer of Musa and Aaron!" Surely it is the force of the truth in consciences, its light in emotions, and touch of hearts ready to receive truth, light and certainty.

The magicians were the most informed of people about the reality of their profession and the extent of what it can achieve. They were the most knowledgeable of people about what Musa came with, whether it was from magic and human beings or from the power that is behind all the power of man and magic. The expert of a profession is the best-equipped person to submit to the truth about it when it is revealed to him. That is because he is closer to recognizing these truths than those who do not know anything about this profession except its triflings. At this point the magicians were transformed from open challenge to absolute surrender the evidence of which they found in themselves with certainty. But the arrogant tyrants do not perceive how the light penetrates to the hearts of man, how it blends with faith or how the warmth of conviction touches it. Because of the length of time they spent trying to enslave people they think they possess the functioning of souls and the changes of hearts.¹⁶⁹

Said Pharaoh: "Have you come to believe in him ere I have given you permission? Behold, this is indeed a plot which you have cunningly devised in this [my] city in order to drive out its people hence! But in time you shall come to know [my revenge]: most certainly shall I cut off your hands and your feet in great numbers, because of [your] perverse-

ness, and then I shall most certainly crucify you in great numbers, all together!"

Sayid Qutb comments about the verse, "have you come to believe in him ere I have given you permission?" As if they were obliged to seek his permission before their hearts could open up to the truth, and they themselves have no power over them. Or that they should seek his permission before their inner beings could tremble while they had no control over their inner selves. But he was an ignorant, foolish despot who was blinded. Yet at the same time he remained arrogant, proud and conceited. Then came the fear over the threatened throne and the shaken authority.

"Behold, this is indeed a plot which you have cunningly devised in this [my] city in order to drive out its people hence!" In another verse pharaoh says, "Verily, he must be your master who has taught you magic!" (20:71) The matter is very clear in its features. It is the call of Musa to "the Lord of all the worlds." It disturbs and frightens. There is no endurance and stability for the rule of tyranny with the call to the Lord of all the worlds. Their kingdoms are based on the disregard of the Lordship of Allah over mankind, the rejection of His law and the establishment of themselves as Lords apart from Allah, legislating for the people what they desire and enslaving them people to what they legislate. Clearly they are two methodologies that are never compatible, two religions that never blend and two Lords who never concur.

Thus Pharaoh announced that savage and cruel threat: "But in time you shall come to know [my revenge]: most certainly shall I cut off your hands and your feet in great numbers, because of [your] perverseness, and then I shall most certainly crucify you in great numbers, all together!"

It is torture, disfigurement, and brutality, the means of the dictators in confronting the truth which they are unable to reverse with evidence and argument. It is the tool of falsehood in the face of clear truth.

But when the reality of faith is brought to light in the soul of man he rises above the forces of the earth and dismisses the cruelty of the tyrants. Belief rises above life and condescends upon the fleeting while it endures besides eternal existence. Verily it does not stop to ask what it would take and what it would leave. What would it lose and what would it gain? And

what difficulties, thorns and sacrifices would it encounter on the way? Because the bright and shining horizon is in front of it right there, hence it does not look or consider anything in the way.

They answered; "Verily, unto our Sustainer do we turn – for thou takest vengeance on us only because we have come to believe in our Sustainer's messages as soon as they came to us. O our Sustainer! Shower us with patience in adversity, and make us die as men who have surrendered themselves unto Thee!"

This is the faith that does not fear or shift. Likewise it is not deceived nor does it surrender. It is the faith that is contented to the end and is pleased with its destiny. It is assured of the return to its Lord and is satisfied with being beside Him.

They answered; "Verily, unto our Sustainer do we turn." The one that recognizes the nature of the battle between itself and tyranny...and that it is essentially a battle of faith, it does not flatter or maneuver, it does not hope for pardon and forgiveness from an enemy who does not accept only that it should abandon faith.

"For thou takest vengeance on us only because we have come to believe in our Sustainer's messages as soon as they came to us."

The one who knows where he is heading in battle and to whom he turns does not seek from his adversary safety and well-being. Instead, it seeks from his Lord patience in adversity and loyalty in Islam.

"O our Sustainer! Shower us with patience in adversity, and make us die as men who have surrendered themselves unto Thee!"

It is a decisive moment in human history with the announcement of the bankruptcy of materialism, which existed since the time they asked Pharaoh for a reward upon victory and hoped for closeness to his authority. The same people now seek to tower above Pharaoh and disdain his threats and intimidation.

The threat vanishes and the intimidation dissolves and faith remains on its course not being distracted, hesitant or diverted.¹⁷⁰

BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL RESULTS

Al Jashmi said, it is necessary that miracles should be of the same things

that are prevalent among the people and makes features like it seem impracticable to them. Medicine was the most likely in the time of Eesa so he came and restored life to the dead, sight to the blind and cured the leper. This was not within the capabilities of medicine. The most likely miracle in the time of our Prophet ﷺ was eloquence, sublime rhetoric and poetry. The Quran came and challenged them with its speech. Its verses showed that they with power made the rope and rod move to the degree that they thought that they were alive. But when they stopped at the basis of what they did and learnt that similar to it was possible to everyone who engaged in their business they realized it was jugglery. Hence the distinction between jugglery and miracle. It stands on its premise and it is possible to bring similar to it and conceal it, as opposed to the miracle. Then it indicates Pharaoh's recognition with humiliation and weakness when he called upon them and their profession to repel a hazard.¹⁷¹

Allama Muhammad Rashid Rida said, Thus Allah concluded what He narrated here concerning the magicians with this prayer, "O our Sustainer! Shower us with patience in adversity, and make us die as men who have surrendered themselves unto Thee!" in other words O our Lord grant us abundant patience, overflow it and pour it upon us with Your support for us in faith and our help with Your spirit. Just as water is emptied from a waterskin so that nothing remains in our hearts fear of any other but You and no hope from any but Your generosity and cause us to die in a state of submission and surrender to Your orders and prohibitions and resignation to Your will without any hardship with the threats of Pharaoh and without obedience to him in word or deed. They combined with this prayer the excellence of faith and Islam.

This illustrates what we affirmed concerning going to the furthest extremes in the pursuit of sound patience, its growth and the expression of its attainment with an outpouring as water is emptied from a bucket or container. As for our view of how this is achieved with the power of faith, its approach is through the mind and experience. That patience is among the qualities of the soul. It is an expression of power in it to bear pain and hardship without dissatisfaction and distress while enabling it not to abandon the truth or approach falsehood. And there is nothing like faith in Allah, fear of Him and hope in Him, which strengthens this

quality in the soul. Its approach is through the transfer of verses such as Allah's saying about the believers who do good deeds that paradise is obligatory for them.

"THOSE WHO, HAVING ATTAINED TO PATIENCE IN ADVERSITY, IN THEIR SUSTAINER PLACE THEIR TRUST." (16:42)

AND HIS SAYING ABOUT THOSE WHO

"ENJOIN UPON ONE ANOTHER THE KEEPING TO TRUTH, AND ENJOIN UPON ONE ANOTHER PATIENCE IN ADVERSITY." (103:3)

OF EQUAL RELEVANCE TO THIS SITUATION IS HIS SAYING, "SO FEAR THEM NOT, BUT FEAR ME, IF YOU ARE [TRULY] BELIEVERS." (3:175)

We have from ancient and modern history what supports this. Those who wrote the accounts of the last wars with its rationale and philosophy that the believers in Allah and the Day of Judgment from all nations are braver and more patient with the calamities of war than others. Thus, the people who are knowledgeable about the ways of creation and most careful with the techniques of warfare are always keen to preserve religion in their armies.¹⁷²

Shaykh Abu Bakr al Jazairi observes the explanation by Allah of His methods is that whenever truth and falsehood meet in any field, truth always emerges triumphant. The negation of magic and failure of its people is assured, as Allah says,

"AND THE SORCERER CAN NEVER COME TO ANY GOOD, WHATEVER HE MAY AIM AT." (20:69)

THE DESTRUCTION OF PHARAOH AND DELIVERANCE OF MUSA AND THE BELIEVERS

AND THERE CAME A TIME WHEN WE INSPIRED MUSA THUS: "GO FORTH WITH MY SERVANTS BY NIGHT: FOR, BEHOLD, YOU WILL BE PURSUED!"

AND PHARAOH SENT HERALDS UNTO ALL CITIES, [BIDDING THEM TO CALL OUT HIS TROOPS AND TO PROCLAIM:] "BEHOLD, THESE [CHILDREN OF ISRAEL] ARE BUT A CONTEMPTIBLE BAND; BUT THEY ARE INDEED FILLED

WITH HATRED OF US SEEING THAT WE ARE, VERILY, A NATION UNITED, FULLY PREPARED AGAINST DANGER – AND SO WE HAVE [RIGHTLY] DRIVEN THEM OUT OF [THEIR] GARDENS AND SPRINGS, AND [DEPRIVED THEM OF THEIR ERSTWHILE] STATION OF HONOUR!"

THUS IT WAS: BUT [IN THE COURSE OF TIME] WE WERE TO BESTOW ALL THESE [THINGS] AS A HERITAGE ON THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.

AND SO THE EGYPTIANS CAUGHT UP WITH THEM AT SUNRISE; AND AS SOON AS THE TWO HOSTS CAME IN SIGHT OF ONE ANOTHER, THE FOLLOWERS OF MUSA EXCLAIMED: "BEHOLD, WE SHALL CERTAINLY BE OVERTAKEN [AND DEFEATED]!"

HE REPLIED: "NAY INDEED! MY SUSTAINER IS WITH ME, [AND] HE WILL GUIDE ME!" THEREUPON WE INSPIRED MUSA THUS: "STRIKE THE SEA WITH THY STAFF!" – WHEREUPON IT PARTED, AND EACH PART APPEARED LIKE A MOUNTAIN VAST.

AND WE CAUSED THE PURSUERS TO DRAW NEAR UNTO THAT PLACE: AND WE SAVED MUSA AND ALL WHO WERE WITH HIM, AND THEN WE CAUSED THE OTHERS TO DROWN.

IN THIS [STORY], BEHOLD, THERE IS A MESSAGE [UNTO ALL MEN], EVEN THOUGH MOST OF THEM WILL NOT BELIEVE [IN IT]. AND YET, VERILY, THY SUSTAINER – HE ALONE – IS ALMIGHTY, A DISPENSER OF GRACE! (26:52-68)

"And there came a time when We inspired Musa thus: "Go forth with My servants by night: for, behold, you will be pursued!" Al Qurtubi wrote about this verse that Allah in accord with His custom among His servants causes those sincere believers among His friends who accepted the revelation brought by His prophets and messengers to be successful. In the same manner, He destroys the unbelievers from His enemies who denied the prophets. It was in this context He ordered Musa to depart with the children of Israel by night. He called them His servants because they believed in Musa. Noting that Pharaoh and his people will pursue them in order to return them. From these words it was implied that Allah would save them. Thus Musa departed with the children of Israel by night.¹⁷³

THE STORY OF EESA ﷺ, THE SERVANT AND MESSENGER AND SON OF THE VIRGIN MARY ¹⁷⁵

Ibn Kathir noted the following morning when there was no caller or replier in their neighborhood Pharaoh became enraged. His anger with the children of Israel increased because of the destruction that Allah wants to bring down upon him. Thus Pharaoh quickly sent throughout the land to mobilize the cream of his army and said to them, they – the children of Israel – “Behold, these [children of Israel] are but a contemptible band” small in number. And “they are indeed filled with hatred of us” at all times. We have always warned about their disaster. A group of the gathering said “verily, a nation united, fully prepared against danger.” Indicating that they were prepared with arms. Hence he indicated to his soldiers what his intentions were, to drive them out of [their] gardens and springs, and [deprived them of their erstwhile] station of honour!

“And so we have [rightly] driven them out of [their] gardens and springs, and [deprived them of their erstwhile] station of honour!”

Allah affirms here that he took them out of a condition of affluence to one of misery. They lost the splendid houses, gardens, rivers, wealth, provisions, power and status which they were afforded in this world.

“IN THE COURSE OF TIME WE WERE TO BESTOW ALL THESE [THINGS] AS A HERITAGE ON THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.” ALLAH ALSO SAYS, “WE GAVE THE PERSECUTED PEOPLE DOMINION OVER THE EASTERN AND WESTERN LANDS WHICH WE HAD BLESSED.” (7:137) LIKEWISE, “BUT IT WAS OUR WILL TO FAVOUR THOSE WHO WERE OPPRESSED, AND TO MAKE THEM LEADERS AND INHERITORS, AND TO GIVE THEM POWER IN THE LAND.” (28:5)

“And so the Egyptians caught up with them at sunrise; and as soon as the two hosts came in sight of one another, the followers of Musa exclaimed: “Behold, we shall certainly be overtaken [and defeated]!” He

replied: “Nay indeed! My Sustainer is with me, [and] He will guide me!”

Ibn Kathir explains that the meaning is that Pharaoh caught up with them at sunrise with his army. As the two forces met there was no doubt or uncertainty, each party staring the other in the eyes and the awaiting outcome. All that was left was confrontation and battle. At that point the followers of Musa who were afraid said, “Behold, we shall certainly be overtaken [and defeated]!” That is because they were forced to take to road to the sea, they had no other way but to follow it and cross it, and this no one was able to do. So they complained to the prophet of Allah about the difficulty which they experienced and faced. He responded to them, as he was ever truthful and trusting in his Lord, “Nay indeed My Sustainer is with me, [and] He will guide me!”

When the situation deteriorated to its worst extent and Pharaoh and his army drew closer in earnestness with all their weaponry, anger, and fury; then the eyes of the children of Israel grew dim and their hearts came up to their throats. At that point Allah the most Compassionate, Powerful and Able, the Lord of the Generous Throne inspired Musa, “Strike the sea with thy staff!” It is believed that when he struck he ordered it open with the permission of Allah, “whereupon it parted, and each part appeared like a mountain vast.” In this manner the sea parted by the magnificent power that emanates from the One who says to a thing be and it is.

Elsewhere in the Quran Allah reveals, “And, indeed, [a time came when] We thus inspired Musa: “Go forth with My servants by night, and strike out for them a dry path through the sea; [and] fear not of being overtaken, and dread not [the sea].”

“AND PHARAOH PURSUED THEM WITH HIS HOSTS: AND THEY WERE OVERWHELMED BY THE SEA WHICH WAS DESTINED TO OVERWHELM THEM BECAUSE PHARAOH HAD LED HIS PEOPLE ASTRAY AND HAD NOT GUIDED [THEM] ARIGHT.” (20:77-79)

The point here is that when the condition of the sea had changed to this state by the permission of Allah Almighty, He ordered Musa to cross it with the children of Israel. They descended into it quickly, delighted with the turn of events. They witness from this staggering event what would certainly have confused onlookers and guided the hearts of

believers. When they crossed it and the last of them departed from it then began the approach of the first of Pharaoh's army. "Then We caused the others to drown."

Ibn Kathir wrote Allah caused Pharaoh and his soldiers to draw closer and enter the sea. He saved Musa and the children of Israel and those who followed them in faith. Not one of them perished. As for Pharaoh and his soldiers, they all drowned and not one of them was saved.

"In this [story], behold, there is a message [unto all men]." With all its strange events, successes and support for the believing servants of Allah there are evidences, compelling arguments and sublime wisdom. "Even though most of them will not believe [in it]."

BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL RESULTS

The prophets are the most deserving people of Allah's help and promise. For if conditions become severe and the people are on the verge of witnessing the fulfillment of Allah's promise and help, then the prophets are more deserving of that help. "The followers of Musa exclaimed: "Behold, we shall certainly be overtaken [and defeated]!" He replied: "Nay indeed! My Sustainer is with me, [and] He will guide me!"

In Pharaoh and his people the prayer of Musa was answered. That Allah should wipe out their wealth and make their hearts so hard that they would not believe, not before they experience the painful punishment. At that time their wealth and belief would not benefit them and affliction would befall them. Allah said to Musa and Aaron when they prayed, "your prayer has been answered"

The continuous performance of good deeds during times of ease is a cause of success during hardship. Some of the righteous predecessors advised, indulge much in the prayer for when Jonah was swallowed by the whale Allah said,

"AND HAD HE NOT BEEN OF THOSE WHO [EVEN IN THE DEEP DARKNESS OF THEIR DISTRESS ARE ABLE TO] EXTOL GOD'S LIMITLESS GLORY, HE WOULD INDEED HAVE REMAINED IN ITS BELLY TILL THE DAY WHEN ALL SHALL BE RAISED FROM THE DEAD." (37:143-4)

Although Pharaoh was an ungrateful disbeliever who shunned the remembrance of Allah when he landed in the sea he exclaimed, "I have come to believe that there is no deity save Him in whom the children of Israel believe." Thereupon Allah said to him, "Now?" – when ever before this thou hast been rebelling [against Us]" (10:90-91)

The people of Islam are the most deserving of the prophets and messengers of Allah. Ibn 'Abbas narrated:

When the Prophet came to Medina, he found (the Jews) fasting on the day of 'Ashura' (i.e. 10th of Muharram). They used to say: "This is a great day on which Allah saved Musa and drowned the folk of Pharaoh. Musa observed the fast on this day, as a sign of gratitude to Allah." The Prophet said, "I am closer to Musa than they." So, he observed the fast (on that day) and ordered the Muslims to fast on it.¹⁷⁴

Allah confirmed the truth of his when he said,

"SURELY THE MEN WHO ARE NEAREST TO IBRAHIM ARE THOSE WHO FOLLOW HIM, THIS PROPHET [MUHAMMAD], AND THE TRUE BELIEVERS." (3:68)

THE VIRTUES OF EESA THE SON OF MARY

These were cited in the glad tidings which Allah Almighty gave to Mary,

"THE ANGELS SAID TO MARY: 'ALLAH BIDS YOU REJOICE IN A WORD FROM HIM. HIS NAME IS AL MASIHK, ISA THE SON OF MARY. HE SHALL BE NOBLE IN THIS WORLD AND IN THE NEXT, AND SHALL BE FAVOURED BY ALLAH. HE SHALL SPEAK TO MEN IN HIS CRADLE AND IN THE PRIME OF MANHOOD, AND SHALL LEAD A RIGHTEOUS LIFE." (3:45-46)

Ibn Kathir explains, these glad tidings from the angels confirmed to Mary that she would bear a great son with an important mission. He would come into being by a word from Allah. That is to say He would command be and he would be. "He shall be noble in this world and in the next, and shall be favoured by Allah." In other words he would be endowed with distinction and an eminent position with Allah in this world because of the divine laws that Allah would reveal to him and also on account of the other favors that He would bestow upon him. In the hereafter Allah would forgive those for whom Eesa intercedes. His example like the fellow prophets of resolve would be accepted.

"He shall speak to men in his cradle and in the prime of manhood." That he would call to the worship of Allah only, associating no partners with Him in his infancy. This of course is a miracle. And he would likewise invite to Allah during his manhood when Allah would reveal to him. "And he shall lead a righteous life" Meaning a life of words and deeds all based on true knowledge and goodness.

Another of his virtues was that Allah Almighty purified and raised him unto Himself. He said,

"O EESA, I AM ABOUT TO CAUSE YOUR TERM ON EARTH TO END AND LIFT YOU UP TO ME. I SHALL TAKE YOU AWAY FROM THOSE WHO DISBELIEVE AND EXALT YOUR FOLLOWERS ABOVE THEM TILL THE DAY OF RESURRECTION." (3:55)

Al Qurtubi pointed out that the meaning of the last verse is similar to Allah's saying,

"NOW WERE IT NOT FOR A DECREE THAT HAS ALREADY GONE FORTH FROM THY SUSTAINER, SETTING A TERM [FOR EACH SINNER'S REPENTANCE] IT WOULD INESCAPABLY FOLLOW [THAT ALL WHO SIN MUST BE DOOMED AT ONCE]." (20:129)

As for ibn Kathir he noted that most of the scholars believed the import of the word "al wafa" – death here is sleep as Allah says,

"AND HE IT IS WHO CAUSES YOU TO BE [LIKE] DEAD AT NIGHT." (6:60)

He also says,

"IT IS GOD [ALONE THAT HAS THIS POWER – HE] WHO CAUSES ALL HUMAN BEINGS TO DIE AT THE TIME OF THEIR [BODILY] DEATH, AND [CAUSES TO BE AS DEAD], DURING THEIR SLEEP, THOSE THAT HAVE NOT YET DIED." (39:42)

It was with this in mind the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used to say whenever he arose from sleep, "All praise is due to Allah who gave us life after he caused us to die."¹⁷⁶

Of Allah's saying, "I shall take you away from those who disbelieve and exalt your followers above them till the day of Resurrection", al Zamakhshari explains, He will uplift them with strong argument, and in most instances with it and with the sword. And his followers are Muslims because they essentially follow the principles of Islam, even if the laws may vary. This, of course, does not include those Jews and Christians who disbelieved him.¹⁷⁷

Among Eesa' virtues also is that he would descend from the heavens at the end of time and establish a just rule. He would destroy the cross, kill the pigs and repeal the jizya – the head tax on free non-Muslims living under Muslim rule.

Allah Almighty says,

"YET THERE IS NOT ONE OF THE FOLLOWERS OF EARLIER REVELATION WHO DOES NOT, AT THE MOMENT OF HIS DEATH, GRASP THE TRUTH ABOUT EESA; AND ON THE DAY OF RESURRECTION HE [HIMSELF] SHALL BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH AGAINST THEM." (4:159)

Abu Huraira once narrated:

Allah's Apostle said, "By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, surely (Eesa,) the son of Mary will soon descend amongst you and will judge mankind justly (as a Just Ruler); he will break the Cross and kill the pigs and there will be no Jizya (i.e. taxation taken from non Muslims). Money will be in abundance so that nobody will accept it, and a single prostration to Allah (in prayer) will be better than the whole world and whatever is in

it." Abu Huraira added "If you wish, you can recite (this verse of the Holy Book): -- "And there is none Of the people of the Scriptures (Jews and Christians) But must believe in him (i.e Eesa as an Apostle of Allah and a human being) Before his death. And on the Day of Judgment He will be a witness Against them."

Al Hafiz said the expression "layushikan" implies that it would soon occur, that it would happen speedily. And that he would be a ruler with this law when he descends among you. For this law will endure and never be revoked. Thus Eesa will be a ruler and judge from this community.

When the hadith foretells that Eesa would "break the Cross and kill the pigs" it means he would abrogate the Christian religion. He would negate their claims and exaltation of Eesa. There would be much benefit from his outlawing the rearing of pigs and the eating of its meat because of its filth and because the divine law never prohibits that which is beneficial.

Concerning the statement that he would repeal the jizya, the view is that in that time there would be only one religion hence there would be no 'people of dhima' (non-Muslims under Islamic rule) to pay the tax. Imam al Nawawi explains, the meaning of the statement that Eesa would repeal the jizya even though it is legitimate in Islam suggests that its legitimacy is linked to the descent of Eesa. He added further that it is not Eesa who would actually annul the ruling of jizya but rather our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the interpreter of the cancellation as seen in this hadith.

Ibn Batal says, in fact we accepted it before the descent of Eesa because there was a need for wealth as opposed to the time of Eesa. In his time there would be no need for wealth. There would be so much of it that no one would accept it.

According to al Hafiz it may be said that the legitimacy of accepting it from the Jews and Christians is due to the uncertainty they have about the Book and their attachment to the ancient laws as they claim. But when Eesa descends this uncertainty would be removed by his inspection, then they would become like the worshippers of idols with the negation of their argument and exposure of their affair. Thus, it is better

to deal with them in such a manner as not to accept the jizya from them.

According to the scholars the wisdom for Eesa' descent instead of any other prophet is to rebut the claim by the Jews that they killed him. Thus Allah would expose their lie. And, moreover, that he is the one who would kill them or likewise that his descent would indicate the approach of the time for him to be buried in the earth.¹⁷⁸

Ibn Kathir says he would descend upon the white minarat of a mosque in Damascus while the call to prayer was already given. The imam of the Muslims would say to him, step forward and lead the prayer O spirit of Allah. He would reply, no, some of you are rulers honored by Allah to rule over others in this community. According to another narration Eesa would say to him, surely the prayer was established for you to lead and he prayed behind him. Then he mounted and with him the Muslims looking for the Masih al Dajjal whom he would meet at the gate of Lud and kill him with his noble hand.¹⁷⁹

Another of Eesa' virtues is that Allah described him as His word and a spirit proceeding from Him. The Quran declares,

"CHRIST EESA THE SON OF MARY WAS (NO MORE THAN) A MESSENGER OF ALLAH, AND HIS WORD, WHICH HE BESTOWED ON MARY, AND A SPIRIT PROCEEDING FROM HIM." (4:171)

It was narrated on the authority of 'Ubada that the Prophet ﷺ said:

"If anyone testifies that None has the right to be worshipped but Allah Alone Who has no partners, and that Muhammad is His Slave and His Apostle, and that Eesa is Allah's Slave and His Apostle and His Word which He bestowed on Mary and a Spirit created by Him, and that Paradise is true, and Hell is true, Allah will admit him into Paradise with the deeds which he had done even if those deeds were few." (Junada, the sub-narrator said, " 'Ubada added, 'Such a person can enter Paradise through any of its eight gates he likes.'")¹⁸⁰

Al Qurtubi noted that the aim of this hadith was to draw attention to the misguidance that the Christians fell into concerning Eesa and his mother. And the benefit of it is seen in the understanding a Christian acquires when he embraces Islam. Imam Nawawi pointed out that this hadith has a distinguished position. It is among the most comprehensive hadiths concerning doctrine for it gathers that which all the disbelieving

communities in their various creeds and dimensions deviated from.

Concerning "His Word", al Hafiz explains that it indicates that he is proof from Allah before His servants. He brought him into being without a father and caused him to speak in his infancy, and raised the dead by his hand. It was said that he was called the Word of Allah because He brought him into being by His word, be. Hence when he came into being by His Word he was called by it in the same manner as is said, sword of Allah and lion of Allah.

As for the naming of Eesa as a spirit proceeding from Him that was on account of the power that Allah endowed him with to restore life to the dead. It was also said that he was so named because he was brought into being without a part of someone who possessed a spirit.¹⁸¹

Still another of Eesa' virtues was reflected in the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Apostle said, "Both in this world and in the Hereafter, I am the nearest of all the people to Eesa, the son of Mary. The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one."¹⁸²

Al Hafiz explained that he was the dearest and closest person to him because he foretold that Muhammad would come after him. Thus the meaning of the hadith is that the origin of their religion is one. That is the worship of one God, even if there are differences in the details of their laws.

Another virtue is contained in the hadith narrated by Abu Huraira in which he reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying:

"NO CHILD IS BORN BUT HE IS PRICKED BY THE SATAN AND HE BEGINS TO WEEP BECAUSE OF THE PRICKING OF THE SATAN EXCEPT THE SON OF MARY AND HIS MOTHER. ABU HURAIRA THEN SAID: YOU MAY RECITE IF YOU SO LIKE (THE VERSE): 'I SEEK THY PROTECTION FOR HER AND HER OFFSPRING AGAINST SATAN THE ACCURSED'" (3: 36).¹⁸³

A final virtue which may be recalled here is that contained in yet another hadith narrated by Abu Huraira; that the Prophet said, "Eesa, seeing a man stealing, asked him, 'Did you steal?' He said, 'No, by Allah, except Whom there is None who has the right to be worshipped' Eesa said, 'I believe in Allah and suspect my eyes.'

Al Nawawi reported that al Qadi said, the apparent meaning of the

hadith is that the one who swore by Allah is believed and what appeared as if he stole is refuted. For maybe he took that which he was entitled to, or with the permission of its owner, or perhaps he did not intend seizure or extortion. Furthermore, it may have appeared to him by the extension of his hand that he took something. But when the man denied this by oath, Eesa retracted his suspicion.¹⁸⁴

Ibn al Qayim rebuts this interpretation in his book, "Ighathah al Lahfan". He declared this interpretation is false. The truth is that the man was a true believer in Allah, a good enough reason to prevent someone from swearing falsely by his name. So the matter came down to the suspicion of Eesa' vision and suspicion of the one who swore. In the end Eesa ascribed the suspicion to his eyes just as Adam questioned satan's honesty when he swore to him that he was a sincere advisor.¹⁸⁵

THE BIRTH OF THE PROPHET EESA, SON OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Allah narrates,

HENCE, [GOD'S] PEACE WAS UPON HIM ON THE DAY WHEN HE WAS BORN, AND ON THE DAY OF HIS DEATH, AND WILL BE [UPON HIM] ON THE DAY WHEN HE SHALL BE RAISED TO LIFE [AGAIN].

AND CALL TO MIND, THROUGH THIS DIVINE WRIT, MARY. LO! SHE WITHDREW FROM HER FAMILY TO AN EASTERN PLACE AND KEPT HERSELF IN SECLUSION FROM THEM, WHEREUPON WE SENT UNTO HER OUR ANGEL OF REVELATION, WHO APPEARED TO HER IN THE SHAPE OF A WELL-MADE HUMAN BEING.

SHE EXCLAIMED: "VERILY, I SEEK REFUGE FROM THEE WITH THE MOST GRACIOUS! [APPROACH ME NOT] IF THOU ART CONSCIOUS OF HIM!" [THE ANGEL] ANSWERED: "I AM BUT A MESSENGER OF THY SUSTAINER, [WHO SAYS,] 'I SHALL BESTOW UPON THEE THE GIFT OF A SON ENDOWED WITH PURITY.'

SAID SHE: "HOW CAN I HAVE A SON WHEN NO MAN HAS EVER TOUCHED ME?—FOR, NEVER HAVE I BEEN A LOOSE WOMAN!" [THE ANGEL] ANSWERED: "THUS IT IS; [BUT] THY SUSTAINER SAYS, 'THIS IS EASY FOR ME; AND [THOU SHALT HAVE A SON,] SO THAT WE MIGHT MAKE HIM A SYMBOL UNTO MANKIND AND AN ACT OF GRACE FROM US.'

AND IT WAS A THING DECREED [BY GOD]: AND IN TIME SHE CONCEIVED HIM, AND THEN SHE WITHDREW WITH HIM TO A FAR-OFF PLACE. AND [WHEN] THE THROES OF CHILDBIRTH DROVE HER TO THE TRUNK OF A PALM-TREE, SHE EXCLAIMED: "OH, WOULD THAT I HAD DIED ERE THIS, AND HAD BECOME A THING FORGOTTEN, UTTERLY FORGOTTEN!"

THEREUPON [A VOICE] CALLED OUT TO HER FROM BENEATH THAT [PALM-TREE]: "Grieve not! THY SUSTAINER HAS PROVIDED A RIVULET [RUNNING] BENEATH THEE; AND SHAKE THE TRUNK OF THE PALM-TREE TOWARDS THEE: IT WILL DROP FRESH, RIPE DATES UPON THEE. EAT, THEN, AND DRINK, AND LET THINE EYE BE GLADDENED! AND IF THOU SHOULDEST SEE ANY HUMAN BEING, CONVEY THIS UNTO HIM: 'BEHOLD, ABSTINENCE FROM SPEECH HAVE I VOWED UNTO THE MOST GRACIOUS; HENCE, I MAY NOT SPEAK TODAY TO ANY MORTAL.'

AND IN TIME SHE RETURNED TO HER PEOPLE, CARRYING THE CHILD WITH HER. THEY SAID: "O MARY! THOU HAST INDEED DONE AN AMAZING! O SISTER OF AARON! THY FATHER WAS NOT A WICKED MAN, NOR WAS THY MOTHER A LOOSE WOMAN!"

THEREUPON SHE POINTED TO HIM. THEY EXCLAIMED: "HOW CAN WE TALK TO ONE WHO [AS YET] IS A LITTLE BOY IN THE CRADLE?" [BUT] HE SAID: "BEHOLD, I AM A SERVANT OF GOD. HE HAS VOUCHSAFED UNTO ME REVELATION AND MADE ME A PROPHET, AND MADE ME BLESSED WHEREVER I MAY BE; AND HE HAS ENJOINED UPON ME PRAYER AND CHARITY AS LONG AS I LIVE, AND [HAS ENDOWED ME WITH] PIETY TOWARDS MY MOTHER; AND HE HAS NOT MADE ME HAUGHTY OR BEREFT OF GRACE."

"HENCE, PEACE WAS UPON ME ON THE DAY WHEN I WAS BORN, AND [WILL BE UPON ME] ON THE DAY OF MY DEATH, AND ON THE DAY WHEN I SHALL BE RAISED TO LIFE [AGAIN]!"

SUCH WAS, IN THE WORDS OF TRUTH, EESA THE SON OF MARY, ABOUT WHOSE NATURE THEY SO DEEPLY DISAGREE. IT IS NOT CONCEIVABLE THAT GOD SHOULD HAVE TAKEN UNTO HIMSELF A SON: LIMITLESS IS HE IN HIS GLORY! WHEN HE WILLS A THING TO BE, HE BUT SAYS UNTO IT "Be" – AND IT IS! (19:15-35)

About Allah's saying, "And call to mind, through this divine writ, Mary. Lo! She withdrew from her family to an eastern place", Al Qasimi wrote she isolated herself from her relatives somewhere east of Jerusalem so that she would not be disturbed from worship.

"She kept herself in seclusion from them, whereupon We sent unto her Our angel of revelation, who appeared to her in the shape of a well-made human being." Accordingly, the angel Gabriel was assigned to her esteemed position for the purpose of blowing into her. He appeared as a man in the best form, perfect features and complete stature.

She exclaimed: "Verily, I seek refuge from thee with the Most Gracious! [Approach me not] if thou art conscious of Him!" Mary feared the angel who appeared in the form of a man and resented being in isolation with him. She suspected that he wanted to seduce her and by so doing from piety and chastity. '[Approach me not] if thou art conscious of Him!' Meaning, fear Allah and seek refuge with him. Hence she deterred him first with the fear of Allah.

[The angel] answered: "I am but a messenger of thy Sustainer, [who says,] 'I shall bestow upon thee the gift of a son endowed with purity."

Fear not he assured her. Do not expect what you are imagining for I am a messenger from your Lord in whom I have sought refugee. He sent me to you so that "I shall bestow upon thee the gift of a son endowed with purity." He would be raised in righteousness and would be free of sin.

Said she: "How can I have a son when no man has ever touched me? – for, never have I been a loose woman!" Al Zamakhshari explains that the word 'mas' as used here refers to legitimate sexual relations. As Allah reaffirms elsewhere, "and if you divorce them before having touched them" (2:237) and "or have cohabited with a woman" (4:43) These verse are not referring to illegal sex.

[The angel] answered: "Thus it is; [but] thy Sustainer says, 'This is easy for Me; and [thou shalt have a son,] so that We might make him a symbol unto mankind and an act of grace from Us.' And it was a thing decreed [by God]."

Ibn Kathir explains in his commentary that the angel responded to her query that Allah had declared: That He would bring into being a son from you even though you have no spouse and you did not commit an indecent act, for He is able to do whatever He wills. Thus He says, 'so that We might make him a symbol unto mankind.' Meaning that he would be a proof and evidence to the people of the power of their Creator. It is He who varied their creation, making their father Adam without male or female, and Eve from a male without a female, and the rest of their descendants from male and female except Eesa. He was brought into being from a male without a male, thus complete the fourth element that symbolizes His complete power and great authority. There is no deity save Him and no Lord but Him.

"And it was a thing decreed [by God]." That Allah Almighty had decided on this matter and there was nothing that could prevent it from being realized.

"And in time she conceived him, and then she withdrew with him to a far-off place. And [when] the throes of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree, she exclaimed: "Oh, would that I had died ere this, and had become a thing forgotten, utterly forgotten!"

Al Qurtubi wrote when the pain of delivery intensified she was forced to seek something to brace upon and hold on to as women normally do at the time of delivery because of the severity of pain. Mary said, "Oh, would that I had died ere this, and had become a thing forgotten, utterly forgotten!" She wished she was dead for two reasons linked to her religion and faith. First: she feared that people would think evil of her, that she had deviated from her religion and thereafter maltreat her. Second: that people would not fall into slander and accuse her of fornication, for this signifies destruction.

"Thereupon [a voice] called out to her from beneath that [palm-tree]: 'Grieve not! Thy Sustainer has provided a rivulet [running] beneath thee.'" Al Shinqiti suggested that there are two assumptions that the one who called her was her son Eesa. Two pieces of evidence prove this. First: that the pronoun usually refers to the last mentioned person except if there is some other evidence that proves otherwise, which must be considered. And the last mentioned in the verse is Eesa. The other proof is that when she came with him to her people and they said what they did to her she pointed to Eesa so that they may speak to him. By so doing it appears that she already knew that he was capable of speaking as he had miraculously done at the time of birth.

There are some differences of opinion among the scholars about what is meant by 'al sariya' here. Some maintain that it is a stream or small river because He caused to run beneath her a river and thus Allah's saying "eat" from the ripe dates mentioned in the verse, "it will drop fresh, ripe dates upon thee." And drink from the river mentioned in His saying, "Thy Sustainer has provided a rivulet [running] beneath thee."

Some scholars contend that "al sariya" refers to Eesa for in the language of the Arab it is used with reference to an honorable and righteous man. Al Shinqiti maintained that in his view 'al sariya' in the verse was referring to a small river.

"And shake the trunk of the palm-tree towards thee: it will drop fresh, ripe dates upon thee. Eat, then, and drink, and let thine eye be gladdened!"

Al Shinqiti said what is understood from the context is that Allah planted for her that palm-tree in an extraordinary manner. The proof was

Allah's saying, "Eat, then, and drink, and let thine eye be gladdened!" which indicates that at the time her eyes found delight in the extraordinary events that were unfolding before her. It was clear that she found no delight by simply eating and drinking while the accusation for which she wished she was dead persisted. In another chapter of the Quran (al Imran) Allah narrates that He effected such miracles for her, "Whenever Zachariah visited her in the sanctuary, he found her provided with food. He would ask: "O Mary, whence came this unto thee?" She would answer: "it is from God; behold, God grants sustenance unto whom He wills, beyond all reckoning." (3:37)

The scholars agree that summer fruits were found in her possession during the winter and winter fruits during the summer.¹⁸⁶

"And if thou shouldest see any human being, convey this unto him: 'Behold, abstinence from speech have I vowed unto the Most Gracious; hence, I may not speak today to any mortal.'

Ibn Kathir notes, this is the essence of the call that was issued to her from beneath her, that she should communicate with whomever she encounters with mute expression and signs. "I vowed unto the Most Gracious; hence, I may not speak today to any mortal." It must be recalled here that according to the religious laws of her people, fasting required abstinence from speech as well as food. In Islam, however, it is disliked that the fasting person should abstain from speech from morning until night.¹⁸⁷

"And in time she returned to her people, carrying the child with her. They said: "O Mary! Thou hast indeed done an amazing! O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a wicked man, nor was thy mother a loose woman!"

Al Qasimi observed that by exclaiming "O sister of Aaron!", her people were really emphasizing the gravity of what she had allegedly done. Aaron was himself a prophet and they meant that she was like him in righteousness.¹⁸⁸

According to al Shinqiti however, Aaron was a righteous man from the children of Israel. The evidence that he was not Aaron the brother of Musa is confirmed in a hadith transmitted by Imam Muslim,

Mughira b. Shu'ba reported: When I came to Najran, they (the

Christians of Najran) asked me: You read "O sister of Harun" (i.e. Hadrat Maryam) in the Qur'an, whereas Musa was born much before Eesa. When I came back to Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) I asked him about that, whereupon he said: The (people of the old age) used to give names (to their persons) after the names of Apostles and pious persons who had gone before them.¹⁸⁹

The view that the person meant here was not the brother of Musa seems more likely when it is recalled that Musa' brother Aaron lived many years before Mary.¹⁹⁰

Ibn Kathir explained when things reached the point of distress, with all the restrictions and she had abstained from speech, her trust and reliance upon the Lord of All Majesty grew. Nothing remained except sincerity and trust in Him. "Thereupon she pointed to him." Meaning address him and speak to him. You would find your answer with him. Whatever explanation you seek is with him. The evil and arrogant among them said, "How can we talk to one who [as yet] is a little boy in the cradle?" In other words how can you entrust our answer to an infant that cannot understand the spoken word and is still nursing in his cradle. Apart from this he cannot even distinguish between pure and impure and despite this you have dealt with us with derision and mockery belittling us with contempt, as you are not responding to us but, instead, refer the answer to an infant in the cradle.

Then he said: "Behold, I am a servant of God. He has vouchsafed unto me revelation and made me a prophet, and made me blessed wherever I may be; and He has enjoined upon me prayer and charity as long as I live, and [has endowed me with] piety towards my mother; and He has not made me haughty or bereft of grace.

"Hence, peace was upon me on the day when I was born, and [will be upon me] on the day of my death, and on the day when I shall be raised to life [again]!"

Ibn Kathir said these are the first words uttered by Eesa the son of Mary. "I am a servant of God." He recognized his Sustainer with worship, and that Allah is his Lord hence he upheld the perfection of Allah in the face of the sayings of the oppressors in their claim that he is the son of Allah. Instead he is a servant and messenger of Allah and the

son of His servant. Then he acquitted his mother from what the ignorant people ascribed to her and accused her of because of him. "He has vouchsafed unto me revelation and made me a prophet." Surely Allah does not grant prophethood to whom they claim. As Allah said,

"AND FOR THEIR REFUSAL TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRUTH, AND THE AWESOME CALUMNY WHICH THEY UTTER AGAINST MARY." (4:156)

"And made me blessed wherever I may be." That is because wherever Eesa was he called to the worship of God alone without the association of partners to him, and he acknowledged His purity and perfection from any limitation or defect so that he would need to have a son and female companion. Glorified and holy is He. "He has enjoined upon me prayer and charity as long as I live." This is the duty of a servant in fulfilling the right of the Mighty and Praiseworthy, with prayer and goodness to His creation with charity. It also includes the purification of the souls from indecent conduct, and purification of surplus wealth by giving to the needy in their various groupings. By extending hospitality to guests, supporting wives, uplifting one-self, drawing close to Allah, and all other forms of obedience and devotion.

Then he said, "and [has endowed me with] piety towards my mother; and He has not made me haughty or bereft of grace." That Allah had made him righteous toward his mother. Thus he confirms her right over him to be kind toward her especially as he has no parent except her. So glory be to He who created His universe, evolved it, and granted guidance to every soul. "And He has not made me haughty or bereft of grace." Meaning I am not rude or hard-hearted, and no word or action comes forth from me that is contrary to the commands of Allah and obedience to Him.

"Hence, peace was upon me on the day when I was born, and [will be upon me] on the day of my death, and on the day when I shall be raised to life [again]!" Al Qurtubi explained that "the day when I was born" indicates in this world from the suggestions of satan. "On the day of my death" connotes in the grave. "And on the day when I shall be raised to life [again]!" This means in the hereafter. After his disclosures from the cradle Eesa did not speak again until he became a young boy.¹⁹¹

"Such was, in the words of truth, Eesa the son of Mary, about whose

nature they so deeply disagree. It is not conceivable that God should have taken unto Himself a son: limitless is He in His glory! When He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it "Be" – and it is!" This verse begins with a signal to him whose illustrious life was described in detail. It suggests his high station, the sublimity of his status, his distinction with noble deeds and appearance on the physical level. He is the subject of the discourse, "Eesa." Allah describes him as "the son of Mary." The purpose of this description is to disprove what the Christians describe him as. It is a denial of their claim with the most compelling evidence and explanation that contradicts their claim because it describes him as a worshipper of his Creator, which is contrary to him being a God and the son of Allah Almighty.

"In the words of truth" is based on praise. To meaning of "truth" here is Allah Almighty and the declaration of His word, which was directed to Eesa. Meaning he was created with the word 'be' and without a father.

"About whose nature they so deeply disagree" – they doubt and dispute. "It is not conceivable that God should have taken unto Himself a son: limitless is He in His glory!" It is not correct and befitting that He should do so. This is yet another refutation of the Christian claim and affirmation of His perfection and purity from what they falsely ascribe to Him.

"When He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it "Be" – and it is!" This is a reproach from Allah with a statement about His affair. For if He wills something it comes into being in the fastest time. So why should someone with this power need an offspring when they are symbols of need and deficiency?192

BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL RESULTS

Al Shinqiti says some scholars deduced from Allah's saying in the verse, "And shake the trunk of the palm-tree towards thee: it will drop fresh, ripe dates upon thee" that the struggle and acquisition of the means of sustenance is an obligation according to Islamic law. It is not contradictory of trust and reliance upon Allah. Like the knowledge of the religion, it is a necessity. That acquiring the means of benefit and deflecting harm in this world is a legal duty that does not contradict trust in Allah in any way. This is because the responsible person acquires the means in accord with the command of his Lord with the full knowledge and conviction that nothing happens except if Allah wills it fulfillment. Thus, he trusts in Allah, knowing that nothing would befall him except that which Allah destined for him whether it be good or evil, even if Allah wills that the effect of the means may contradict their own causes.193

Know that this view adopted by ibn Kathir that the meaning of Allah's saying, "Convey this unto him: 'Behold, abstinence from speech have I vowed unto the Most Gracious; hence, I may not speak today to any mortal'", means that she was ordered to communicate by signs. It suggests that these signs were revealed in the place of words, even though in this verse it is called speech. Very often the word speech was used in reference to signs. Among the proof that signs were used in place of words is that conveyed in the story of a female slave whom the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ asked, where is Allah? She pointed to the heavens whereupon the Prophet ordered, "free her for she is a believer."194 He acknowledged her sign as if she had verbally declared the faith, which is the basis of all religions.

Thus ibn al Qasim narrated on the authority of Malik that if the dumb person makes a sign of divorce then it becomes binding upon him. Likewise, al Shafi' says concerning a man who falls ill and suffers from a speech defect he becomes like the dumb in matters of remarriage and divorce. As for Abu Hanifa he argued that this is allowed if the sign is known. If, however, there were any doubt about it, then such a ruling would be invalid.

Al Qurtubi records on the authority of al Rabie' ibn Khaytham that,

there is nothing better for the woman in afterbirth than ripe dates in accord with the verse, "It will drop fresh, ripe dates upon thee." Had Allah known of something better than ripe dates for women during afterbirth He would have given it to Mary. Thus it is said, dates are good for women in the post-natal period. It is also said if childbirth becomes difficult upon the woman, nothing is better than ripe dates, and there is nothing according to al Zamakhshari better for the sick person than honey.¹⁹⁵

He also said that whoever vows not to speak to a human being it may be said that this is a pious deed and his vow should be fulfilled. It may also be said that this is not allowed in our law because of the constraints and hardship it imposes upon the self. In a sense, it is like a vow to stand in the sun or the like. Thus the pledge to observe silence was allowed in their law but not in Islam. He added that among the traditions in our fasting is the abstinence from vile speech. Abu Huraira narrated that Allah's Apostle said, "Allah said, "If one of you is fasting, he should avoid sexual relation with his wife and quarreling, and if somebody should fight or quarrel with him, he should say, 'I am fasting.'"¹⁹⁶

The Prophet also said in another hadith narrated by Abu Huraira: "Whoever does not give up forged speech and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink (i.e. Allah will not accept his fasting.)"¹⁹⁷

Al Qasimi reported that Al Razi transmitted from al Qadi concerning Allah's saying, "peace was upon me" that peace is an expression of what brings security and safety in prosperity and the erasure of impurity. It is as if a servant asked his Lord and requested from Him what He informed about. Accordingly, it is assured that the prayers of the prophets are answered. The most critical moments when man is in need of safety are in these three situations; the day he is born, the day he dies, and the day he is raised. In all these instances man is in need of happiness from Allah. It is a requirement so that he would be protected from evil and worries in all circumstances.

It was in accord with the custom decreed by Allah that He willed the continuity of life through procreation from a male and female in every species and kind without exception. This tradition continued for many long ages until it became entrenched in the awareness of man that this is the only way. They forgot the first event that led to the existence of man

because it was outside the norm. Thus Allah wanted to show them the example of Eesa, the son of Mary, to remind them of the freedom of authority and absoluteness of will. That it is not confined to the law it chooses and that the event of Eesa would not be repeated because the basic law is the functioning of the method that He established and the law He chose to be implemented. This single event is enough to remain before the view of mankind as a clear sign of the freedom of will and its lack of restraint within the limits of the laws "so that We might make him a symbol unto mankind."

HIS MIRACLES, THE DESCENT OF THE MEAL AND ACQUITTAL OF EESA FROM THE CHRISTIAN LIES

ALLAH SAYS IN THE CHAPTER OF THE REPAST;

Lo! God will say: "O Eesa, son of Mary! Remember the blessings which I bestowed upon thee and thy mother – how I strengthened thee with holy inspiration, so that thou couldest speak unto men in thy cradle, and as a grown man; and how I imparted unto thee revelation and wisdom, including the Torah and the Gospel, and how by My leave thou didst create out of clay, as it were, the shape of [thy followers'] destiny, and then didst breathe into it, so that it might become, by My leave, [their] destiny; and how thou didst heal the blind and the leper by My leave, and how thou didst raise the dead by My leave; and how I prevented the children of Israel from harming thee when thou camest unto them with all evidence of the truth, and [when] those of them who were bent on denying the truth were saying, 'This is clearly nothing but deception!'

And [remember the time] when I inspired the white –garbed ones: "Believe in Me and in My Apostle!" They answered: "We believe; and bear thou witness that we have surrendered ourselves [unto Thee]."

[And,] lo, the white-garbed ones said: "O Eesa, son of Mary! Could thy sustainer send down unto us a repast from heaven?" [Eesa] answered: "Be conscious of God, if you are [truly] believers!"

Said they: "We desire to partake thereof, so that our hearts might be set fully at rest, and that we might know that thou hast spoken the truth to us, and that we might be of those who bear witness thereto!"

Said Eesa, the son of Mary: "O God, our sustainer! Send down upon us a repast from heaven: it shall be an ever-recurring feast for us – for the first and the last of us – and a sign from Thee. And provide us our sustenance, for Thou art the best of providers!"

GOD ANSWERED: "Verily, I [ALWAYS] DO SEND IT DOWN UNTO YOU: AND SO, IF ANY OF YOU SHOULD HENCEFORTH DENY [THIS] TRUTH, ON HIM, BEHOLD, WILL I INFILCT SUFFERING THE LIKE OF WHICH I HAVE NEVER [YET] INFILCTED UPON ANYONE IN THE WORLD!"

AND LO! GOD SAID; "O EESA, SON OF MARY! DIDST THOU SAY UNTO MEN, 'WORSHIP ME AND MY MOTHER AS DEITIES BESIDE GOD?' [EESA] ANSWERED: "LIMITLESS ART THOU IN THY GLORY! IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE FOR ME TO SAY WHAT I HAD NO RIGHT TO [SAY]! HAD I SAID THIS, THOU WOULDST INDEED HAVE KNOWN IT! THOU KNOWEST ALL THAT IS WITHIN MYSELF, WHEREAS I KNOW NOT WHAT IS IN THY SELF. VERILY, IT IS THOU ALONE WHO FULLY KNOWEST ALL THE THINGS THAT ARE BEYOND THE REACH OF A CREATED BEING'S PERCEPTION. NOTHING DID I TELL THEM BEYOND WHAT THOU DIDST BID ME [TO SAY]: 'WORSHIP GOD, [WHO IS] MY SUSTAINER AS WELL AS YOUR SUSTAINER.' AND I BORE WITNESS TO WHAT THEY DID AS LONG AS I DWELT ON THEIR MIDST; BUT SINCE THOU HAST CAUSED ME TO DIE, THOU ALONE HAST BEEN THEIR KEEPER: FOR THOU ART WITNESS UNTO EVERYTHING. IF THOU CAUSE THEM TO SUFFER- VERILY, THEY ARE THY SERVANTS; AND IF THU FORGIVE THEM- VERILY, THOU ALONE ART ALMIGHTY, TRULY WISE!" (5:110-118)

"Remember the blessings which I bestowed upon thee and thy mother." Al Qasimi says Allah is here reminding Eesa of His favor upon him and his mother. That He purified her and exalted her above the women of the world. "How I strengthened" you - Eesa -with Gabriel the "holy inspiration" to enforce the evidence or lift your pure spirit above wrongful relations so that it would know that it is not through the intervention of human beings and bear witness of your innocence and that of your mother. Through this support you were strengthened, "so that thou couldest speak unto men in thy cradle, and as a grown man." Meaning in the weakest and strongest circumstances with the same message, in infancy and adulthood, and in the case of the latter, when the mind attains its utmost maturity.¹⁹⁸

Ibn Kathir notes that Eesa was made you a prophet and caller to Allah in his childhood and adulthood. He was made to speak in the cradle as an infant and bore witness to the innocence of his mother from all the false allegations leveled against her. He acknowledged servitude to Allah

Who informed him of His message to him. Allah called you to worship Him, "so that thou couldst speak unto men in thy cradle, and as a grown man." Thus Eesa would invite people to Allah in his childhood and manhood. Speech as mentioned here includes the invitation to Allah because to do so in manhood is not an unusual matter.¹⁹⁹

About the verse, "And how I imparted unto thee revelation and wisdom," Al Alousi said their kind is the revelation, writing and wisdom: speech that is correct and accurate "including the Torah and the Gospel". Allah identified these two books for mention to emphasize their honor. "And how by My leave thou didst create out of clay, as it were, the shape of [thy followers'] destiny, and then didst breathe into it, so that it might become, by My leave, [their] destiny" You fashion "out of clay", meaning its kind the figure of a bird and "by My leave" you breathe into it and it becomes a bird that flies as all others.

"And how thou didst heal the blind and the leper by My leave" together with the ability to fashion things with the permission of Allah. And His saying "and how thou didst raise the dead by My leave" The matter of bringing the dead out of their graves after they had decayed is a remarkable miracle that deserves to be manifestly remembered at the time.

"And how I prevented the children of Israel from harming thee", meaning the Jewish tribes when they seriously contemplated killing him and failed. "When thou camest unto them with all evidence of the truth." Al Qasimi said, if it is said that method of citing Allah's favor upon Eesa and the disbelievers claim about him that 'this is clearly nothing but deception!' and that it is no blessing according to what is seen; so what is the secret in this? The answer can be obtained from the famous proverb; every favored person is always envied. Hence the denial of this speech by the Jews shows that the favors of Allah toward Eesa were indeed immense. So it is good to mention that by citing the favors.

"And [remember the time] when I inspired the white -garbed ones: "Believe in Me and in My Apostle!" They answered: "We believe; and bear Thou witness that we have surrendered ourselves [unto Thee]."

Ibn Kathir says and this is also among the favors bestowed upon him. That he was blessed with companions and helpers. The idea conveyed by

the word 'wahi' in this context is inspiration as Allah supported elsewhere when Allah said,

"WE INSPIRED [THUS] TO THE MOTHER OF MUSA: SUCKLE HIM [FOR A TIME]" (28:7).

Accordingly, some early Muslim scholars explained concerning this verse, that the companions and helpers were inspired to do so and they complied.

Ibn Kathir says perhaps the meaning is that Allah inspired them through Eesa who called them to faith in Allah and His prophet. They responded to him and followed saying, "We believe; and bear Thou witness that we have surrendered ourselves [unto Thee]."²⁰⁰

[And,] lo, the white-garbed ones said: "O Eesa, son of Mary! Could thy Sustainer send down unto us a repast from heaven?" [Eesa] answered: "Be conscious of God, if you are [truly] believers!"

Al Zamakhshari declared their saying "Could thy Sustainer" was not the type which were uttered by believers who revered their Lord. Likewise, Eesa' response to them meant, fear Allah and do not question His power and ability and do not suggest matters to Him. Do not give your opinion about what you desire from the verse lest you would be destroyed if you disobey Him thereafter that. "If you are [truly] believers!" In other words, if your claim to faith is true.

Their request from Eesa "Could thy Sustainer" also implies, are you able to ask your Sustainer without any distraction to turn you away from asking Him. "Al Mai'da" is the dining table that is laid with food.²⁰¹

"Said they: "We desire to partake thereof, so that our hearts might be set fully at rest, and that we might know that thou hast spoken the truth to us, and that we might be of those who bear witness thereto!"

Allama Muhammad Rida, explained we request it for four benefits:

One: that we wish to eat from it because we need food and we have nothing to satisfy our needs. It is said the meaning of food is the blessing. Second, we wish to satisfy our hearts about what we believe in the power of Allah with a miracle that is extraordinary. That is to merge the knowledge of vision, touch and smell to the knowledge of hearing from you and the knowledge of thought and reason. Thirdly, that we may

know this type of knowledge – the knowledge of witnessing – meaning that the situation with You is that You have granted us what You promised of the fruits of faith as an answer to the prayer, even if it was by extraordinary means. Fourthly, that we may be among the witnesses of these signs with the children of Israel so the one who is ready for faith would believe and those who believe would be increased in faith. This is what we understand by the direction of their sayings to the chosen one from the correctness of their faith.

“Said Eesa, the son of Mary: “O God, our Sustainer! Send down upon us a repast from heaven: it shall be an ever-recurring feast for us – for the first and the last of us- and a sign from Thee. And provide us our sustenance, for Thou art the best of providers!”

When Eesa realized the truth of their intention and that they did not want to make it difficult or to try him, he made this prayer to Allah. He called upon Him in the name of His all-encompassing nature of the meaning of divinity, power, wisdom, mercy and so on. He said, “O God, our Sustainer”, meaning O Allah. He called upon Him as Sustainer signifying the meanings of authority, planning, refinement and goodness. “Our Sustainer” meaning our Lord, all of us. O our guide and overseer of our affairs, send down upon us a, repast bodily or spiritually so that these prompters would witness it with their eyes and nourish their bodies or spirits with it. He did not say that the request should include the grant of a repast from the earth even if it were by normal means.

Then Eesa described this repast with what he wished to benefit from it saying, “it shall be an ever-recurring feast for us”, meaning a festival especially for us believers only or an honor and comfort.

The word “eid” is used with reference to joy and happiness, and also with reference to religious or civil occasions for which people gather on a specific day of the year to worship or for worldly reasons. Then Eesa’ saying, “and a sign from Thee” means that it would be a symbol and testimony of the truth of my prophethood and call.

God answered: “Verily, I [always] do send it down unto you: and so, if any of you should henceforth deny [this] truth, on him, behold, will I inflict suffering the like of which I have never [yet] inflicted upon anyone in the world!”

This promise by Allah, al Qurtubi says is His answer to Eesa as it was Eesa’ answer to the white –garbed ones. That was by virtue of the fact that He sent it down along with His true promise. But the children of Israel were ungrateful and they disbelieved after it was sent down. So they were turned into monkeys and pigs. Ibn Umar said, the people who would be most severely punished on the Day of Judgment would be the hypocrites, those companions from the repast who disbelieved and Pharaoh’s people.

There are differences of opinion among the scholars about whether the repast was actually sent down or not. The majority view – and it is the truth – that it was sent down. This is based on Allah’s saying, “Verily, I [always] do send it down unto you.”²⁰²

“And Lo! God said; “O Eesa, son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, ‘Worship me and my mother as deities beside God?’ Ibn Kathir says, Allah Almighty would ask Eesa on the Day of Judgment as a form of honor to him as well as rebuke and disapproval of those who worshipped him. This includes those who denied him and falsely claimed that he was the son of Allah or that he was an associate of Allah. Exalted is Allah above what they say. Allah asked Eesa though He knows what He is asking about never occurred. But this is merely to condemn those who lied about him. [Eesa] answered: “Limitless art Thou in Thy glory!” Meaning You are infinitely above the need to have an associate.

“It would not have been possible for me to say what I had no right to [say]!” In other words no one is deserving of this but You. “Had I said this, Thou wouldest indeed have known it! Thou knowest all that is within myself, whereas I know not what is in Thy Self. Verily, it is Thou alone who fully knowest all the things that are beyond the reach of a created being’s perception.” This is extreme politeness in discourse and response. “Nothing did I tell them beyond what Thou didst bid me [to say]” When you sent me to them and revealed upon me the Book, I did not say anything but that which you ordered me. Then Eesa explained what Allah told Him to say, ‘Worship God, [who is] my Sustainer as well as your Sustainer.’ Indeed my Creator and your Creator, my Sustainer and your Sustainer. “And I bore witness to what they did as long as I dwelt on their midst; but since Thou hast caused me to die.” That is, You raised me unto Yourself when they wanted to crucify and kill me. You

had mercy upon me and delivered me from them and made one of them look like me so that they avenged him. When this happened, "Thou alone hast been their keeper: for Thou art witness unto everything."

Then Eesa declared in the manner of submitting his affair to Allah Almighty and disassociating himself from the Christian folk. "If Thou cause them to suffer- verily, they are Thy servants" and they deserve that. "And if Thou forgive them- verily, Thou alone art almighty, truly wise!" This submission and dependence on Allah's will is on the condition that there would be no need for it to occur. Thus he says, "Thou alone art almighty, truly wise." He did not say You are the Oft Forgiving, Most Merciful.203

BENEFITS AND SPIRITUAL RESULTS

Sayid Qutb says, this discussion – the discussion of requesting the repast exposes to the nature of Eesa' people, their cream - the white-garbed ones. There is a vast difference between them and the companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. They are the white-garbed ones who Allah inspired with faith in Him and his prophet Eesa. They believed and declared their submission before Eesa. Despite this, even after witnessing Eesa' miracles they demanded new miracles to satisfy their hearts and know that he was sincere to them and with which they could testify to those who came after them.

As for the companions of Muhammad ﷺ, they never requested from him a single miracle after their entrance into Islam. Their hearts believed and were satisfied after they were mixed with the delight of faith. They believed their prophet and they never came back after this to demand evidence or question his sincerity. They bore witness to him without a miracle except this Quran.204

Muhammad Rashid Rida says, this worship which the Christians devote to Mary the mother of the Messiah – such as prayer consisting of supplication, praise, invocation of sustenance and intercession, fasting attributed to her and named after her, all this is linked to submission and to her memory, image, statues and beliefs that she has unseen powers that enable her according to their belief to benefit them or harm in this world and in the Hereafter personally or through her son. They affirmed the need to worship her. Yet, we do not know a sect from among them that ascribe the word God to her. Rather they call her the mother of God. Some of them maintain that this is factual and not allegorical. The Quran says here that they took her and her son as two gods. That they did not just name them gods, but they actually worshipped them as confirmed in another verse; "Behold, God is the Christ, son of Mary." This has another meaning, which the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ explained from Allah's saying, "They have taken their rabbis and their monks as well as the Christ, son of Mary – for their lords beside God." (9:31)205

Extremism among the creation has been a cause of polytheism among the nations. The Christians went to the extremes about Eesa until they

made him the son of God or the third of a trinity. Allah responded to them with His saying;

"Indeed, the truth deny they who say, "Behold, God is the third of a trinity" – seeing that there is no deity whatever save the One God. And unless they desist from this their assertion, grievous suffering is bound to befall such of them as are bent on denying the truth. Will they not, then, turn towards God in repentance, and ask His forgiveness? For God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

The Messiah, son of Mary, was but an apostle: all [other] apostles had passed away before him; and his mother was one who never deviated from the truth; and they both ate food [like other mortals]. Behold how clear We make thee messages unto them: and then behold how perverted are their minds!" (5:73-5)

Ibn Kathir says these verses clarify the status of Christ and his mother, that he was a servant of Allah and that his mother was a truthful woman. She was not lewd as the Jews claimed. They also confirm that she was not a prophetess as certain Muslim scholars claim. Allah's saying, "They both ate food [like other mortals]" is a metaphor for their biological functioning as is the case with other human beings. So how could someone with such needs be considered a God? Exalted is Allah high above their ignorance and what they say.

Because excessive praise and extremism by the creation are among the greatest causes of polytheism among nations the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ prohibited excessive praise of himself. Umar narrated: "I heard the Prophet saying, "Do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians praised the son of Mary, for I am only a Slave. So, call me the Slave of Allah and His Apostle."206

THE RAISING UP OF EESA AND FALSEHOOD OF THE JEWS AND CHRISTIANS CONCERNING THE CRUCIFIXION

Allah says in Surah al Imran,

"Lo! God said: "O Eesa! Verily, I shall cause thee to die, and shall exalt thee unto Me, and cleanse thee of [the presence of] those who are bent on denying the truth; and I shall place those who follow thee [far] above those who are bent on denying the truth, unto the Day of Resurrection. In the end, unto Me you all must return, and I shall judge between you with regard to all on which you were wont to differ." (3:55)

He also says,

"And so, [we punished them] for the breaking of their pledge, and their refusal to acknowledge God's messages, and their slaying of prophets against all right, and their boast, "Our hearts are already full of knowledge" Nay, but God has sealed their hearts in result of their denial of the truth, and [now] they believe in but few things; and for their refusal to acknowledge the truth, and the awesome calumny which they utter against Mary, and their boast, "Behold, we have slain the Christ Eesa, son of Mary, [who claimed to be] an apostle of God!" However, they did not slay him, and neither did they crucify him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so; and, verily, those who hold conflicting views thereon are indeed confused, having no [real] knowledge thereof, and following mere conjecture. For, of a certainty, they did not slay him: nay, God exalted him unto himself – and God is indeed almighty, wise. Yet there is not one of the followers of earlier revelation who does not, at the moment of his death, grasp the truth about Eesa; and on the Day of Resurrection he [himself] shall bear witness to the truth against them." (4:155-159)

Ibn Kathir writes, and so it was with the Jews, may Allah's anger, curse and punishment be upon them; for when Allah sent Eesa the son of Mary with signs and guidance they envied him because of what Allah Almighty had given him. He was granted prophethood and outstanding miracles through which he restored the sight of the blind, healed the leper, and raised the dead to life by the permission of Allah. He fashioned from clay

a bird then blew into it and it flew with the permission of Allah. Besides, there were other miracles, which Allah honored him with and caused to occur by his hand. Despite all these amazing acts, they disbelieved and contradicted him. They sought to harm Eesa by all the means at their disposal until it got to the stage when Eesa the prophet of Allah decided not to live among them in their town. So he began to travel frequently with his mother. This did not convince them so they went to the then king of Damascus. He was a polytheist who worshipped the stars. It was said to the people of his Greek community that there was in Jerusalem a man who was stirring trouble among the people, leading them astray, and corrupting the subjects of the king. The king became angry and wrote to his deputy in Jerusalem ordering him to arrest the accused, crucify him, place thorns upon his head and halt his mischief among the people.

When the letter arrived, the deputy carried out his order. He and a group of Jews went to the house where Eesa was gathered with a group of his companions of twelve or thirteen. Some sources claim seventeen. That was a Friday after mid evening before the night of Saturday. They found him in this house. When it became clear that there was no way for them to enter upon him or for him to come out to them, he said to his companions which one of you is prepared to resemble me and be my companion in paradise? A young man among them agreed. As if uncertain that he was not up to the task, Eesa asked them a second and third time. Each time none agreed except the same young man. Eesa then informed him that he would be the one. Thus Allah made the young man appear exactly like Eesa, as if he really was him. Then a cavity opened in the roof of the house and Eesa began to sleep. He was exalted into the heaven while he was in this state. As Allah said: "O Eesa! Verily, I shall cause thee to die, and shall exalt thee unto Me."

After he was raised the companions left the house and the group of Jews saw the young boy they presumed was Eesa. So they seized him in the night, crucified him and placed thorns upon his head. By so doing the Jews demonstrated that they intended to crucify him and they bragged about this. A group of Christians accepted this because of their ignorance and lack of reasoning. "However, they did not slay him, and neither did they crucify him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had

been] so." Allah reaffirms, "For, of a certainty, they did not slay him." They were not sure that it was he that they killed; indeed they still had doubts. "Nay, God exalted him unto Himself – and God is indeed almighty, wise."

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31. 'UMDAT AL TAFASIR': (p.9). IN THE INTRODUCTION AND CONCERNING THE ISRAELITE ANECDOTES WHICH IBN KATHIR TRANSMITTED. GIVEN THE GREAT FREQUENCY WITH WHICH THEY APPEARED IN MOST TAFSIRS AND PROPHETIC BIOGRAPHIES, IT MAY BE THAT HE MENTIONED THEM TO DRAW ATTENTION AND WARN ABOUT THEM. THE EVIDENCE OF THIS IS THAT HE INvariably POINTED OUT THEIR INCORRECTNESS AND FALSEHOOD. THE THING THAT EVOKE THE MOST SURPRISE IS THE NAMES AND DETAILS THAT ARE MENTIONED IN THE STORIES BUT ARE NOT MENTIONED IN THE QURAN OR VERIFIED BY THE SUNNAH OF ALLAH'S MESSENDER ﷺ. WE DO NOT KNOW ABOUT THE UNSEEN A THIRD SOURCE. SO FROM WHERE HAVE THEY BEEN TAKEN. I HAVE MADE A DELIBERATE EFFORT TO AVOID MENTIONING ANY OF THE ISRAELITE FABLES IN THESE STORIES; EXCEPT WHAT ALLAH ALMIGHTY NARRATED TO US OR VERIFY BY THE SUNNAH. THIS, WITH FULL RECOGNITION THAT HIS COMMENTARY HISTORY ARE THE BEST CLASSIFIED AND MOST BENEFICIAL. MAY ALLAH REWARD HIM FOR HIS SERVICE TO ISLAM AND MUSLIMS WITH EVERY GOOD. AND MAY HE FORGIVE US AND HIM FOR THE SHORTCOMINGS OR MISTAKES OF OUR PENS.
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107. MAHASIN AL TAWIL, (8/118)
108. QASAS AL AMBIYA, 160

109. AL KASHAF, 4/55
110. HE GAVE A STATEMENT THAT KA'AB, MAY ALLAH HAVE MERCY ON HIS SOUL, WAS NEVER ACCUSED OF LYING BUT RATHER THAT HE USED TO TRANSMIT STORIES OF BANI ISRAEL WHICH WERE THEMSELVES FALSE. NO ONE DID HOWEVER MENTION HIM AMONG THE WEAK NARRATORS OR THOSE WHO WERE REJECTED. SEE INTRODUCTION.
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135. AL QURTUBI SAID THERE ARE DIFFERENCES OF OPINIONS CONCERNING THIS REVELATION TO THE MOTHER OF MUSA. ONE GROUP SAYS; IT WAS A STATEMENT IN HER SLEEP. QATADA SAYS, IT WAS AN INSPIRATION. ANOTHER GROUP SAYS, IT WAS THROUGH AN ANGEL THAT CAME TO HER. MUQATIL SAYS, GABRIEL CAME TO HER WITH THIS, THUS IT WAS A CLEAR REVELATION AND NOT MERELY AN INSPIRATION. THEY ALL AGREE THAT SHE WAS NOT A PROPHET AND THAT THE SENDING OF AN ANGEL TO HER WAS IN THE SAME MANNER THAT THE ANGEL SPOKE TO THE BALDHEADED, THE LEAPER AND BLIND IN THE FAMOUS HADITH TRANSMITTED BY BUKHARI AND MUSLIM. TAFSIR 6/4966
136. QASAS AL AMBIYA, 298
137. AL KASHAF, 3/396
138. JAMIE' AL BAYAN FI TAFSIR AL QURAN, 10/24
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140. FI THILAL AL QURAN, 5/2680-2681

141. TAYSIR AL LATIF AL MANAN, P.130
142. FI THILAL, 5/2681
143. QASAS AL AMBIYA, 303
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146. IBID.
147. FI THILAL, 5/2684
148. TAFSIR AL LATIF AL MANAN, 131-32
149. IBID.
150. RUH AL MA'ANI, 20/64
151. AL KASHAF, 3/402
152. FI THILAL AL QURAN, 5/2687
153. AL JAMI' LI AHKAM FI AL QURAN, 6/4987
154. AL KASHAF, 3/404
155. TAFSIR AL QURTUBI, 6/4988
156. IBID. TRANSMITTED BY BUKHARI AND OTHERS. IT IS CALLED THE HADITH OF THE WOMAN WHO GAVE HERSELF AWAY
157. AL JAMI' LI AHKAM AL QURAN, 6/4996
158. FI THILAL AL QURAN, 5/2688
159. TAFSIR AL QURAN AL ATHIM, 3/388
160. RUH AL MA'ANI, 20/77
161. FI THILAL, 5/2693
162. TAFSIR AL MANAR, 9/39-40
163. RUH AL MA'ANI, 7/17
164. ZAAD AL MASIIR, 3/237
165. AL KASHAF, 2/139
166. MAHASIN AL TA'WIL, 7/228
167. AL JAMI' LI AHKAM AL QURAN, 3/2695
168. MAHASIN AL TA'WIL, 7/230
169. FI THILAL, 3/1350
170. IBID. 3/1351-2
171. MAHASIN AL TAWIL, 7/231
172. TAFSIR AL MANAR, 9/77
173. AL JAMI' LI AHKAM AL QURAN, 6/4816
174. BUKHARI, BOOK OF PROPHETS, 982, MUSLIM, 613
175. IBN KATHIR EXPLAINED HE WAS CALLED THE 'MASEEH' BECAUSE OF HIS SOJOURN IN THE EARTH. 'LAMSAHU' REFERS TO HIS JOURNEY AND FLIGHT WITH HIS RELIGION AWAY FROM THE TRIALS OF THE TIME CAUSED BY THE FIERCE DENIAL OF THE JEWS AND THEIR LIES AGAINST HIM AND HIS MOTHER.

176. BUKHARI, THE BOOK OF SUPPLICATIONS, (11/130), MUSLIM, (17/35)
177. AL KASHAF, 1/367
178. FATH ALBARI, 1/491-492
179. QASAS AL AMBIYA, p.628
180. BUKHARI, BOOK OF THE PROPHETS, 6/473 AND MUSLIM, THE BOOK OF FAITH, 1/227
181. FATIH AL BARI, 6/474
182. BUKHARI, 6/478, BOOK OF THE PROPHETS
183. MUSLIM, 15/120, THE BOOK OF VIRTUES
184. COMMENTARY BY AL NAWAWI OF SAHIH MUSLIM, 15/121
185. FATIH AL BARI, 6/490
186. ADWA AL BAYAN (4/245-250)
187. QASAS AL AMBIYA, (575)
188. MAHASIN AL TAWIL, 7/119-120
189. MUSLIM, THE BOOK OF BEHAVIOR, 14/116-117. AL NAWAWI NOTED THAT SOME HAVE USED THIS HADITH TO APPROVE THE ADOPTION OF THE NAMES OF THE PROPHETS. THE SCHOLARS ARE UNANIMOUS ABOUT THIS. THOUGH AL QADI POINTED OUT THAT IT IS DETESTED TO ADOPT THE NAMES OF THE ANGELS ACCORDING TO A SAYING OF HARITH IBN MISKIN THAT IMAM MALIK LOATHED THE ADOPTION OF THE NAMES GABRIEL AND YASIN.
190. ADWA AL BAYAN, 4/271
191. AL JAMI' LI AHKHAM AL QURAN, 3/4143-4
192. RUH AL MA'ANI, 16/91-2
193. ADWA AL BAYAN, 4/250-1
194. MUSLIM, THE MOSQUES, 5/23-4
195. AL JAMI' LI AHKHAM AL QURAN, (5/4135)
196. BUKHARI, THE BOOK OF FASTING, (4/103)
197. BUKHARI, THE BOOK OF FASTING, (5/4137)
198. MAHASIN AL TAWIL, 6/425
199. TAFSIR AL QURAN AL ATHIM, 2/115
200. TAFSIR AL QURAN AL ATHIM, 2/115
201. AL KASHAF, 1/693
202. AL JAMI' LI AHKHAM, 3/2366
203. QASAS AL AMBIYA, 586-7
204. FI THILAL AL QURAN, 2/998
205. TAFSIR AL MANAR, 7/262-3
206. BUKHARI, 6/478, BOOK OF THE PROPHETS

ABOUT THE BOOK

The Quran presents the stories of the prophets, which are undoubtedly the highest landmarks and most distinguished episodes in human history. And why not, after they have combined the best style and chosen the most suitable events to highlight its message and the excellent example of the seal of prophets and those who supported them. The love of imitating is a natural quality ingrained in man, especially of the one that is followed. These are some of the unique features of these stories and are not found elsewhere. Is it not utterly disgraceful, therefore, that we should read the stories of the Quran and understand them simply as folklore that have long vanished with the passage of time? And what is the relationship between them and us anyway? Surely by Allah, this is destruction, but it is not due to ignorance of the purpose of these stories; that they are advices for those who take heed, reminders for those who think, and instruction to those who desist.

On the whole, there is no other purpose for these stories except their benefit, counsel, and enlightenment to the Muslims.

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